A COMMON VISION: CONTESTING HISTORY AND EDUCATION IN POSTWAR LEBANON

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AND EDUCATION IN POSTWAR LEBANON

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines Lebanese history textbooks and debates surrounding reform of the history curriculum to show how history education functions in postwar Lebanese society. Although the Ta'if Agreement ending the civil war called for a unified history curriculum to foster national unity, repeated failures of reform efforts have left the outdated 1970 curriculum in place and a variety of privately published textbooks in Lebanese classrooms. The lack of a unified history curriculum has come to be seen as a symbol of sectarianism, and specifically of the problem of multiple competing visions of Lebanon's history and identity. History education in Lebanon provides a particularly rich source for studying the production of history because it provides a forum for multiple voices of opposition to speak directly to each other on historical issues. By contesting the history curriculum, a wide variety of actors including journalists, politicians, bureaucrats, teachers, and textbook authors engage in the production of Lebanon's history. In this paper I examine the processes informing construction of official texts (including curricula and textbooks) and political contests among interest groups and the state over the functions of education. I analyze four twelfth-grade history textbooks to show how private publishers and textbook authors diverge and converge in constructing historical narratives within the confines of what the curriculum marks as official history. This examination suggests that a centralized curriculum, minimal as it is, and a crucial state exit exam work to constrain the broad range of narratives possible in private textbooks. I also investigate two major failed attempts to

update and unify the history curriculum through media coverage and the views of policymakers, politicians, and educationalists toward the process. The debates surrounding these attempts show how unstated disagreements over the social and political function of history education have compounded disagreements over its proper content, undermining efforts at reform. Although the history curriculum may remain unchanged, it still informs new editions of textbooks and inspires lively public debate, all of which constitutes a continuing process of historical production aimed at creating a history, or histories, of Lebanon.

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CHAPTER ONE

HISTORY AND EDUCATION IN LEBANON

> For any people to develop and maintain a sense of political community, it is necessary that they share a common vision of their past.[1]

Lebanon's education system is among the best in the region by almost any measure, having been the site of significant efforts in private education beginning in the late Ottoman period. The weaknesses of the education system stem from the corrosive effects of sectarianism, the central dysfunction of Lebanese political life. Lebanese history has always been a political battleground, and the teaching of history in schools especially so. Political and ideological disputes, compounded by the civil war, have prevented the Lebanese state from imposing a unified and up-to-date history curriculum. Although the Ta'if Agreement ending the civil war called for a unified history curriculum to foster national unity, repeated failures of reform efforts have left the outdated 1970 curriculum in place and a variety of privately published textbooks in Lebanese classrooms. The lack of a unified history curriculum has come to be seen as a symbol of sectarianism, and specifically of the problem of multiple competing visions of Lebanon's history and identity. Journalists, politicians, and educationalists argue that privately published textbooks encourage tendentious sectarian narratives of Lebanese history, and that the outdated curriculum leaves students ignorant of modern history and thus doomed to repeat its violent mistakes.

Education is not simply a site where finished narratives of Lebanese history are deployed, but also a site of the production of history. The past does not become history exclusively in the libraries of AUB and Université Saint-Joseph. History is produced by various nonprofessionals

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[1] Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History Lebanon Reconsidered* (Berkely:

in any number of public spaces, but perhaps nowhere more than in education. History education in Lebanon provides a particularly rich source for studying the production of history because it provides a forum for multiple voices of opposition to speak directly to each other on historical issues. Public debates over defining the proper history represent "primary, and singular, sites of critique of deeply felt and broadly held ideas, principles, and values," through which "states and nations and cultures—never easily defined—are constructed beyond the formulae through which scholars have discussed them."[2] By contesting the history curriculum, a wide variety of actors including journalists, politicians, bureaucrats, teachers, and textbook authors engage in the process of producing Lebanon's history.

In this paper I examine that process at two points: the "context of text production" and the "context of influence."[3] The former refers to the political processes surrounding construction of official texts (including curricula and textbooks), while the latter refers to the contests among interest groups and the state over the functions of education. In the context of text production, I examine four twelfth-grade history textbooks to show how private publishers and textbook authors diverge and converge in constructing historical narratives within the confines of what the curriculum deems official history. This examination suggests that a centralized curriculum, minimal as it is, and a crucial state exit exam work to constrain the broad range of narratives possible in private textbooks. In the context of influence, I examine two major failed attempts to update and unify the history curriculum through media coverage and the views of policymakers, politicians, and educationalists toward the process. The debates surrounding these attempts show

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[2] David William Cohen, *The Combing of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994): 244.

[3] Stuart Foster and Keith Crawford, "Introduction: The Critical Importance of History Textbook Research," in *What Shall We Tell the Children? International Perspectives on School History Textbooks*, ed. Stuart Foster and Keith Crawford (Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing, 2006), 12-13.

how unstated disagreements over the social and political function of history education have compounded disagreements over its proper content, undermining efforts at reform.

Lebanese Historiography

Classic Debates

Understanding the contemporary debates over Lebanese history is impossible without situating them in the classic, acrimonious disputes of Lebanese historiography. The first challenge is finding a point to begin. As one of the most popular histories has it, "the modern state of Lebanon, in the frontiers defined on 1 September 1920, never existed before in history."[4] That date marked General Henri Gouraud's announcement of the French mandate of Greater Lebanon. The borders of this entity were the same borders demarcating the Lebanese Republic today, although at that moment they represented far more territory than the geographical and political designation "Lebanon" had previously encompassed. Though Mount Lebanon had been a relatively isolated region for centuries, the immediate prior incarnation of Greater Lebanon was the *Mutasarrifiyya*, a semiautonomous province of the Ottoman Empire in Mount Lebanon. To this territory the French added the cities of the coast (Beirut, Saida, Tyre, and Tripoli) as well as the Beqaa Valley and additional territory to the north and south.[5] Lebanon in its modern borders was therefore a new state including Mount Lebanon along with areas many considered more integrally linked with Damascus or Palestine. Its creation reflected and energized a debate over how Mount Lebanon and its people related to the broader Syrian, Mediterranean, and Arab contexts.

The classic study of Lebanese historiography is Kamal Salibi's *A House of Many Mansions*, in which he argues that the central historiographical conflict for the Lebanese was the

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[4] Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* [Second edition] (London: Pluto, 2012), 75.
[5] Ibid., 80.

"fundamental disagreement over the historicity of their country: the Christians by and large affirming it, and the Muslims denying it."[6] At the heart of this debate was the question of whether Lebanon constituted a separate entity, with its own history and identity, or an inseparable part of a Greater Syria (or in fact, an Arab nation). The idea of a Lebanese nation arose in the nineteenth century with the surge in nationalist ideology among writers of the Ottoman Empire. Lebanese nationalism developed alongside Arab and Syrian nationalisms, working sometimes with and sometimes against these notions. A number of Christians of what would become Lebanon, especially Butrus Bustani, played central roles in the development of Syrian Arab nationalism in the 1860s and 1870s. For some, the notion of an Arab linguistic identity was tempting precisely *because* they were Christians. An Arab nationalism divorced from religion would allow Syria's Muslims, Christians, Druze, and Jews to share in the life of the nation without casting them as minorities below the level of Muslims. Already though, some Christian writers were staking out a separate identity for Lebanon, albeit as a special district within the context of Syria.[7]

As it developed, this trend can be called Lebanist or Lebanese nationalist. Its central contention was that Lebanon was a special area, distinct from its surroundings, boasting a continuous history stretching back thousands of years. Put forward mostly by Christians and particularly Maronites, it comprised a spectrum of belief, at the most extreme end of which was the notion that Lebanon was a refuge for the Christians of the Middle East. Lebanese nationalists included diehard Maronite nationalists, who saw Lebanon as the rightful home of Christians to the explicit exclusion of Muslim Arabs, as well as others who saw it as a pluralistic space. Many

[6] Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions,* 3.
[7] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1789-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 274-276.

Maronite historians embracing Lebanism traced their roots back to the ancient Phoenicians, arguing that they had maintained this bloodline even as Arabic became the dominant language of the region. They were thus not Arabs, but a separate people, a Christian nation with Phoenician roots that had maintained their religion in the forbidding mountains of Lebanon against the violent encroachment of Islam all around them. The birth of Greater Lebanon represented a vindication of their separateness and defense of their homeland from Arab and Muslim domination.[8]

But some of Lebanism's finest advocates offered a more subtle vision of a Lebanon defined by its cosmopolitan acceptance of all religions and all peoples. The Phoenicianist strand of Lebanism finds its clearest expression in the figure of Michel Chiha, a Catholic banker and journalist active in the early- and mid-twentieth century. He popularized the idea of the "merchant republic," a Lebanon defined by its business ethic, its cosmopolitanism, and its connections to the broader Mediterranean world. The modern Lebanese were the heirs to a proud Phoenician tradition of mercantile prowess, exploration, and tolerance.[9] With Lebanism's rejection of Arab identity, many of its proponents discarded the Arabic language as well. It was better to take up French, the language representing the enlightened Christian West to which the Lebanese truly belonged, than Arabic, the foreign language of conquest. Muslims and Christians were conceived of as partners in the nation. But this notion inescapably favored Christians, who maintained the lion's share of political power. The idea that Lebanon should figuratively face west to the Mediterranean world was unacceptable to Arab nationalists and unconvincing to the bulk of Lebanese Muslims, whose cultural referent was the Arab-Muslim civilization to the east

[8] Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 319-320.
[9] Michelle Hartman and Alessandro Olsaretti, "'The First Boat and the First Oar': Inventions of Lebanon in the Writings of Michel Chiha," *Radical History Review* 86 (2003): 38.

and south. The ability to maintain this vision of Lebanon, in which Muslims and Christians theoretically shared equally, directly required power to remain with its Christian adherents at the expense of its Muslim opponents. These two conflicting aspirations, which tended always to favor the reality of power over the ideal of equality, are what Albert Hourani called "the inescapable dilemmas of the Lebanese Christian nationalist."[10]

A major intellectual force for Lebanese particularism was the Jesuit orientalist Henri Lammens, who taught at Université Saint-Joseph in Beirut in the early twentieth century. A critic of Islam, Lammens wrote a survey of Syrian history in 1921 distinguishing Syria from both Arab and Islamic culture. The Syrians were not Arabs, he claimed, but a people apart, cosmopolitan and oriented toward Mediterranean and Western influences.[11] The part of Syria that had most retained its special character against the cultural and political impositions of Muslim Arabs was what he called *l'Asile du Liban*. While the notion of a non-Arab Syrian ethnicity did not jibe exactly with Lebanism, Lammens' notion of Lebanon as a refuge for religious minorities fleeing persecution by the Sunni Muslim state gained wide currency among the Christians, and even the Druze and Shia, of Lebanon.[12]

This notion of Lebanon as the mountain refuge provided intellectual ammunition to a group of Maronites who had begun working toward the establishment of Lebanon under French protection as a Christian homeland. The birth of Greater Lebanon was the realization of this dream, but the incorporation of areas outside of Mount Lebanon undermined the Christian character of the population, leaving Christians as barely a majority. In order to justify this Greater Lebanon (a blatant vehicle for securing overlapping French-Maronite interests) to its

[10] Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age,* 323.
[11] Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, 132.
[12] Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, 135.

significant non-Christian population, Maronite intellectuals were under some pressure to provide non-religious reasons for the separation of Lebanon from Syria.[13] With the encouragement of the French authorities, the Phoenicianist idea would be extended and developed in the early twentieth century and during the mandate era, although its appeal among non-Christians would remain limited.[14]

Vitriolic debate quickly emerged over the historicity of the new state, and the question of whether Lebanon constituted a distinct entity was more than academic. Arab nationalists saw the segmentation of the Middle East into states along arbitrary lines as a Western imperialist imposition. The separation of Lebanon was a particularly egregious violation of Arab unity, cutting off an important part of Syria (including almost all of its ports and significant fertile agricultural land) in order to serve the interests of France and her Maronite collaborators. The very existence of a separate Lebanon was an innovation. Lebanon, such as it was, was part of Syria. The argument was particularly strong for the largely Sunni coastal areas that had never before been appended to Mount Lebanon. This view constituted the Arabist side of the debate, put forward mostly by Sunnis and Greek Orthodox.[15]

Asher Kaufman identified four distinct intellectual currents in opposition to Lebanism. The first (they are not ordered chronologically) was an Arab-Muslim nationalism, represented by Rashid Rida and Shakib Arslan, rejecting the special identity of Lebanon in favor of a linguistic and religious (Islamic) Arabism.[16] The second was a secular pan-Arabism put forward by Christians like Constantin Zureiq, Edmond Rabbath, and Amin al-Rihani. The attitude toward

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[13] Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, 170.
[14] Asher Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia: In Search of Identity in Lebanon* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 16.
[15] Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, 28-29.
[16] Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia*, 197.

religion varied in this camp. Zureiq and Rabbath recognized a special place for Islam in Arab civilization and identity, while Rihani was a firm secularist and opponent of all religion. In general these authors sought either to challenge the idea that the modern Lebanese were Phoenicians, or simply to argue that Phoenicians were Arabs and thus part of Arab civilization.[17] The third current was the mainstream Sunni Lebanese perspective, which was distinct from the Arab-Muslim nationalism of Rashid Rida in the lack of a program for an Islamic state. This perspective was nonetheless not entirely secular, but based on an identity that was first Arab and second Muslim. As the existence of a separate Lebanon became inescapable, this current continued to argue for an Arab (and against a Christian or Phoenician) identity for Lebanon.[18] The fourth current was that of Anton Sa'adeh's Syrian Social Nationalist Party. Similar in some ways to Lammens' notion of a Syrian nation, the SSNP position was secular and dedicated to the unity of a Greater Syria. Phoenicianism was rejected as a crutch of Christian nationalism, though the Phoenician legacy was incorporated into the history of Syrian achievement.[19]

As mentioned, the Lebanist camp was predominantly Maronite while the Arabist camp was predominantly Sunni (although there were always exceptions and gradations). Lebanon's other religious communities did not line up smoothly on either side of the debate. The Greek Orthodox are perhaps the best example, because among them were some of the primary proponents of both sides of the debate. By and large the Orthodox did not share the Maronite enthusiasm for a Phoenician identity and a French culture. They were far more likely to consider themselves Arabs, and their relationship with Lebanon was more complex. While Christian predominance certainly benefited them locally, the Arab Greek Orthodox community was not

[17] Ibid., 200-212.
[18] Ibid., 220-221.
[19] Ibid., 215-217.

concentrated in Lebanon. Large communities existed across the Arab world, particularly in Syria, Jordan, and Palestine. A secular Arab nationalism stressing a shared Arab identity might benefit the Orthodox community more than a particularist Christian nationalism seen in opposition to an Arab-Islamic civilization. Greek Orthodox Arabs outside of Lebanon would be left in the cold.[20]

The Druze presented a different problem. The historical relationship of the Druze with Mount Lebanon inclined them to accept the idea of a distinct Lebanon with a separate history. Nonetheless, they considered themselves Arab, and the vision of a Christian Lebanon marginalized their own historical importance and contemporary political voice. Like the Greek Orthodox, they also had coreligionists in neighboring Syria and Palestine, somewhat complicating the exclusive identification with Lebanon.[21] The Druze maintained a distinct version of Lebanese history, overlapping with Lebanism in its acceptance of a unique Lebanese entity, but diverging in that it considered Lebanese history Arab history and rejected the outsized role Lebanism ascribed to the Christians of Mount Lebanon during the rule of the Druze emirs.[22]

The Shia of Lebanon did not have the same religious connection to the overwhelmingly Sunni Greater Syria, and they were in fact highly concentrated in Lebanon. Like the Druze, however, there was no reason for them to favor a political and historical vision centered on Christianity, especially as the Maronites of Mount Lebanon had been historical antagonists of the Shia in Jebel ‘Amil.[23] The Shia identified as Arab, though traditional Shiite historiography was critical of much of the Arab history taken for granted by (Sunni) Arab nationalism. The debate over Lebanon’s historicity was simply not as urgent for the Shia, since their political interests did

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[20] Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, 43-45.
[21] Ibid., 204-205.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid., 205.

not align so clearly with one side or the other and they were largely marginalized by Sunni and Maronite political dominance.[24]

These two basic paradigms retained their preeminence until the 1970s, when they were both challenged by an ascendant Islamic vision of history. The Islamic narrative took different forms for Sunnis and Shia, gaining firmer hold with Sunnis because of the association of Arabism with Sunni dominance. For both, however, the Islamic vision of history challenged Arabism on the grounds that it divided the Islamic world artificially into races, to the detriment of the *umma*. The Shiite idiom of Islamic history got a huge boost from the Iranian Revolution of 1979, but the Sunni version also grew in the 70s and 80s. This vision rejected the special history of Lebanon, but it also closed out some previous supporters of Arabism, including the Sunni upper class of the coast, the Druze, and the Greek Orthodox.[25]

New Concerns

Kamal Salibi wrote optimistically during the civil war that the passage of time and shared experience had led to a fundamental consensus on the historicity of Lebanon. Though the existence of a separate Lebanese people prior to the twentieth century remains unsettled, the existence of today's Lebanon can hardly be denied. Actors across the board, in other words, have come to share a Lebanese identity, and their new conflicts have come to be more about leadership of that community than about its justification to exist.[26]

Not everyone was so quick to deny the lingering effects of these differences. Kais Firro argued that the "parameters" of the debate over Lebanese history were set in the "first hour," the

[24] Ibid., 206.
[25] Ibid., 213-214.
[26] Ibid., 211.

initial moment of intellectual contention during the mandate and the early independence period.[27] Current debates continue to be rooted in the contentions of that first generation. Firro divided the historiographical debate into three basic schools. The first, largely Christian, continues to conceptualize Lebanon as a land of diversity. The second, largely Muslim, conceptualizes Lebanon as Arab and therefore united by its identity both internally among the sects and externally to the larger Arab world. The third school, comprising both Christians and Muslims, views confessionalism as a political tool used by the powerful to institutionalize their authority. In this view, Lebanon and the Lebanese people should by nature be united, but are kept apart by the manipulations of sectarian elites. [28]

Firro accused Salibi of "fanciful anthropology," of "inventing a common Arab identity" for all of Lebanon's confessions so as to make possible a shared history. But a common identity (in the sense of historical origin), Firro argued, was not sufficient to disrupt the power of confessionalism. Confessionalism has always been about much more than origin. It represents significant differences in conceptions of "national identity, the distribution of power and wealth, the nature of Lebanon's culture, the legitimacy and history of the state, ties with the West as well as the East, and so forth."[29] Agreement about the past could not make up for contemporary divergences in political programs.

Whether the passage of time has softened the debate over the identity of Lebanon, it has certainly introduced challenging new disagreements over Lebanese history. Even as Lebanese of all sects came to accept the existence of Lebanon as a *fait accompli* and even to embrace this identity, the question remained what type of loyalties this state would command. The ascendance

[27] Kais Firro, *Inventing Lebanon: Nationalism and the State Under the Mandate* (New York: I.B. Tauris), 44.
[28] Ibid., 45.
[29] Ibid., 44-45.

of Gamal Abdel Nasser in the mid-twentieth century revitalized Arabism and divided the Arab world largely between those who supported an Arab nationalism with Nasser as its spokesman, and those who opposed it for a variety of reasons. In Lebanon this proved to be a bitter contest, especially as the United Arab Republic brought Syria and Egypt together in 1958. The question of whether to embrace this alliance against existing Western alliances sparked a brief civil war in that year, but a compromise solution left the debate open.[30]

Lebanon's trajectory thereafter is well known, with the state finally descending into chaos in 1975. Fifteen years of civil war not only hardened many lines of sectarian mistrust but also created entirely new fault lines along and within communities. Lebanese history would now have to incorporate the rise of militant Palestinian nationalism, ever-shifting relations among internal groups and external actors (chiefly Syria and Israel), the cantonization of Lebanon and ethnic cleansing of villages and neighborhoods, high-profile massacres, and attempts to destroy or supplant the state. Furthermore, demographic shifts and the development of new political groups have changed the weight attached to the traditional historiographical narratives. One important legacy of the war was the splintering of Christian politics. While Christians had been divided since the birth of the Lebanese republic (for instance, the bitter rivalry between Émile Eddé and Bishara al-Khury), the war years witnessed a fragmentation characterized by unprecedented bitterness and reciprocal massacres. Combined with the lopsided emigration of Christians during the fighting, this fragmentation left the Christian community seriously weakened at war's end.[31] The Shiite community has experienced an evolution from marginalization and alienation to increasing political and demographic weight. In the process they have build what Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr calls a "Lebanese Shi'ite-centered national

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[30] Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 134,
[31] Ibid., 249.

narrative by producing memories of centuries of oppression and interweaving them with specific Shiʿite interpretations of history and conditions in Lebanon."[32] Although there are many Shiite voices articulating different nationalisms, Shaery-Eisenlohr highlights a dominant narrative shared by the two main Shiite parties, Hizbullah and Amal, that incorporates Shiite life and piety more fully into the Lebanese nation than traditional Christian or Arabist paradigms.[33] The rise of Shiite politics has injected new understandings of Lebanese history into a debate once dominated by Sunnis and Christians.

The Lebanese Educational System

Education has been a battleground for these historiographical debates since their inception. In Lebanon, the educational field was already highly developed by World War I, including locally established secular and sectarian schools alongside missionary schools, the most famous of which were AUB (the Syrian Protestant College) and Université Saint-Joseph. Despite the relative advantages of Lebanon over surrounding areas, education in the Ottoman era did not spread far beyond a privileged, urban, mostly Christian milieu.[34]

Lebanon's educational system is divided between a public system of state schools and an extensive system of private schools. Some of these private schools are secular, though many are affiliated with a particular confessional community. Private education has therefore naturally served in many cases to socialize students into their respective confessional communities rather

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[32] Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shiʿite Lebanon*: *Transnational Religion and the Making of National Identities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), xiii.
[33] Ibid., 5.
[34] Mark Farha, "The Historical Legacy and Political Implications of State and Sectarian Schools in Lebanon," in *Rethinking Education for Social Cohesion: International Case Studies* [Kindle edition], ed. Maha Shuayb (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

than a shared national culture.[35] Article 10 of the Lebanese constitution deals with education: "Education is free as long as it does not violate public order or contradict morals or affect the dignity of one of the religions or creeds. Nothing will affect the rights of the sects in terms of the establishment of their private schools, as long as they go about it in accordance with general regulations that the state issues regarding public education."[36] In reality this has meant anemic state control over private schools, with limited inspection and oversight.[37]

The dangers of this system were commonly accepted when stakeholders sat down to hammer out an end to the civil war. The Ta'if Agreement called for "the protection of private education and strengthening of state control over private schools and the textbook."[38] Implementation of this provision has been difficult and piecemeal given the traditional strength of the private educational sector and the relative weakness of state institutions against entrenched sectarian interests. The Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) successfully developed new curricula and textbooks for all subjects, except history, based on the 1995 New Framework for Education in Lebanon. Internal conflict delayed the production of the history curriculum until several years later, at which point chapter three picks up the story. According to official 2001-2002 statistics, public schools accounted for 39% of students while private schools accounted for 61%.[39] Secondary students (grades 10-12) divide 35 hours of instruction a week among a relatively large number of subjects (between 12 and 16 depending on year and track). The proportion of those hours spent on the social sciences, including subjects like philosophy

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[35] Mark Farha, "The Historical Legacy and Political Implications of State and Sectarian Schools in Lebanon."
[36] "*Al-dustur al-lubnani*."
[37] Mark Farha, "The Historical Legacy and Political Implications of State and Sectarian Schools in Lebanon."
[38] "*Ittifaq al-Ta'if.*"
[39] CERD. "*Al-talamidh, al-mu'allimun, wa-l-madaris*, 2001-2002."

and geography, depends again on what year and track, but all students spend one hour a week on history and one hour a week on civic education.[40]

A History of History Education

Historiographical conflicts predictably moved to the battleground of the school. With the birth of the mandate, the French government immediately set out reconstructing the education system as a vehicle for the dissemination of a philosophy sympathetic to French rule. Public education in French Syria and Lebanon was considered a tool of political authority and the *mission civilatrice*. High Commissioners Henri Gouraud and Maxime Weygand pushed French language education and politically useful history and geography curricula in order to cultivate support for the French position in Lebanon and Syria. The new curricula stressed Syrian, rather than Arab, history, linking it to Hellenic and Mediterranean cultures. Islam was downplayed and relations with Europe (and France in particular) made prominent. This put state schools in line with the existing trend in Christian schools.[41] As education developed under the mandate, history curricula would come to call for half Syrian and Lebanese history, and half European history. Arabists frequently criticized these curricula, but public schools remained an important counter to a private school system dominated by Christian institutions.[42]

Lebanese nationalists had a significant head start in historical production, but the perceived need to combat their vision sparked a concerted response. In 1935 two teachers at the Sunni Makassed College, Zaki Nakkash and Omar Farrukh, wrote a textbook called *Tarikh Suriya wa-Lubnan* (*History of Syria and Lebanon*). This text articulated a vision of Lebanon as a part of Syria with no distinct history or claim to a separate existence. Two Christians, Asad

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[40] CERD. "*Jadawal al-tawzi' al-usbu'i li-l-mawad al-ta'limiyya wa-hasasuha*."
[41] Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia* 112-113.
[42] Ibid., 114-115.

Rustum (Greek Orthodox) and Fuad Afram al-Bustani (Maronite), wrote a new textbook in 1937 called *Mujaz Tarikh Lubnan* (*Précis of the History of Lebanon*) at the behest of "the Christian establishment in Lebanon, allegedly in league with the French High Commission."[43] The response swung too far in the opposite direction, advocating such an extreme vision of Lebanese particularism that it was prevented from coming into use in the state schools in the face of insistent Muslim protest.[44] The mandate period saw an increasing indigenization of history making, but textbooks remained at the center of controversy. The fragmented Lebanese political landscape was reflected in a fragmented historiographical landscape. Proponents of different visions of Lebanon projected those visions onto the past, and often aggressively promoted them to strengthen their political and social position. One of the best avenues for this promotion was in the schools, and so history textbooks and control of the schools themselves, which dictated choice of book along with other means of control, became important tools of political-historical contention.[45]

The independence period saw a notable expansion of the public school system, which nonetheless continued to serve a smaller proportion of Lebanese students than the private system.[46] The government in this period set out specifically to use education as a means to foster a national identity that would keep the new independent state together. This effort was centered on the idea of Lebanon represented by the 1943 National Pact, which stated that Lebanon was independent but with an Arab face. The government's education policy was designed to combat sectarianism, and it did so through history and geography as well as the Arabization of the

[43] Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions* 202-203.
[44] Ibid., 203-204.
[45] Nadya Sbaiti, "Lessons in History: Education and the Formation of National Society in Beirut, Lebanon, 1920-1960s" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2008): 194.
[46] Mark Farha, "The Historical Legacy and Political Implications of State and Sectarian Schools in Lebanon."

curriculum. The state increased its control over public schools, centralizing the system and mandating that all schools use the same curricula.[47] The government issued new curricula for all subjects between 1968 and 1971. In terms of history, the curriculum sought more to homogenize than to address Lebanon's sectarian diversity, partly as a cautious reaction to a volatile political climate, given the violence in Lebanon in 1958 and the 1967 war.[48] The outbreak of the civil war in 1975 put huge pressure on the education system, particularly in the public sector, and prevented any meaningful attention to reform of educational issues. Nonetheless, the issue of history education loomed large with the end of the civil war and the daunting task of bringing together a country scarred by years of fighting. The Ta'if Agreement demanded that the state "reexamine its curriculum and develop it in order to encourage national belonging and assimilation, and spiritual and cultural openness, and to unify the textbooks in history and civic education."[49]

History remains the only subject that did not receive an updated curriculum in the round of curricular reform in the 1990s. As a result, schools are still forced to use the curriculum promulgated in the 1960s and 1970s. This curriculum ends at Lebanese independence in 1946. A number of attempts have been stymied at various points of completion by disagreement over the content of the curriculum. Consensus is elusive, though all sides seem to agree that a unified history curriculum is vital to unity. The term "curriculum" is a somewhat tricky one. Most broadly defined, it might be understood "to encompass educational philosophy, values, aims and objectives, organizational structures, teaching and learning materials and methods, student experiences, assessment, and learning outcomes….[including] both intended or officially

[47] Nemer Frayha, "Education and Social Cohesion in Lebanon," 82-83.
[48] Ibid., 83-84.
[49] "*Ittifaq al-Ta'if*."

prescribed curriculum, as well as actually implemented or real curriculum."[50] In this paper I will use the term with the more limited meaning of "the content, methods, and structures of intended learning experiences."[51] The existing curriculum, in fact, contains only a content guide with no attention to methods. As used here, the term "curriculum" will refer specifically to documents published by the CERD and correspond to the Arabic term *manhaj.*

Civic Education

For most authors there are two possible forums for addressing the lack of nationalist sentiment in the education system: the history curriculum and the civic education curriculum. The argument for civic education as a driver of national unity is quite straightforward in that the entire purpose of civic education is to foster responsible, informed, and active citizenship. The civic education curriculum aims to "strengthen [the student's] attachment to his Lebanese identity and to his land and to his nation in a united and collaborative political democratic framework."[52] There could be no greater goal for such a course, according to many writers, than to foster a sense of national unity above sectarian affiliation.

Civic education is interesting in the context of this paper because the battle for addressing national unity through education centered on both history and civic education, as expressed in the Ta'if Agreement. Some have seen civic education as a pragmatic alternative to a unified history curriculum, that is, a tool for building consensus and unity in the classroom while bypassing the history debate. Unfortunately, multiple scholars have reviewed the civic education curriculum and found it deficient in its ability to foster either active citizenship or national unity.

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[50] Sobhi Tawil and Alexandra Harley, "Education and Identity-based Conflict: Assessing Curriculum Policy for Social and Civic Reconstruction," in *Education, Conflict, and Social Cohesion,* ed. Sobhi Tawil and Alexandra Harley (Geneva: UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 2004), 17.
[51] Ibid.
[52] CERD, "*Manhaj madat al-tarbia al-wataniyya wa-l-tanshi'a al-madaniyya.*"

The civic education curriculum is still useful to consider because it was updated and unified years after the Ta'if Agreement. In other words, what's being demanded in the history curriculum has already been done in the civic education curriculum, providing some clues to how a unified and updated history curriculum might look (see chapter two).

Literature Review

Education and Post-conflict Reconciliation

The process of reconstruction after a violent civil war like the one Lebanon endured entails far more than the rebuilding of physical infrastructure. The bonds of society must be rebuilt in a process of reconciliation among the opposing parties. Elizabeth A. Cole has called reconciliation "the complex process by which deeply divided societies recover the ability to function normally and effectively after violence," which may include "justice, apology, forgiveness, individual healing, commemoration, and the reform of education."[53] This last point is one of the most challenging but vital pieces of the reconciliation process.

The importance of education in post-conflict societies is based on an understanding of its socially constructive and destructive possibilities. On the one hand, "in societies marked by ethnic tension, education can aggravate intergroup hostility through uneven access or denial of access, through its use as a weapon in cultural repression, by manipulating history for political purposes, and segregating students to ensure inequality, lower esteem, and reinforce stereotyping."[54] On the other hand, in more positive settings, education can be a force for

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[53] Elizabeth A. Cole, "Introduction: Reconciliation and History Education," in *Teaching the Violent Past: History Education and Reconciliation*, ed. Elizabeth A. Cole (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007): 1.
[54] Eluned Roberts-Schweitzer, "Introduction," in *Promoting Social Cohesion Through Education: Case Studies and Tools for Using Textbooks and Curricula*, ed. Eluned Roberts-Schweitzer (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2006), 2.

understanding and cooperation, and a check against the tendency to resort to violence.[55] Education therefore represents not an objective good, but a field in which people and institutional factors can discourage or encourage a return to violence. The process of education designed to help societies recover from violent conflict goes by a variety of names: peacebuilding education,[56] education for social cohesion,[57] education for reconciliation,[58] and more. Often the most important aspect of education for social cohesion is the subject of history. The power of historical narratives to divide and unite is widely understood, and history education is a central locus of these narratives, good and bad: "How schools navigate and promote historical narratives through history education partly determines the roles they and those who control the schools play in promoting conflict or social reconstruction."[59]

The precise role of history education in post-conflict reconstruction is difficult to assess anywhere because of the difficulty of disentangling it from other post-conflict developments. Education for social cohesion has been a major plank of reconciliation efforts in a number of states recovering from violent conflict, with approaches varying as widely as results. In some cases states have set out to build a strong sense of national unity where one is lacking, while in other states the focus has been on breaking down nationalist narratives. Education efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina have sought to create a sense of national unity and identity in an

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[55] Ibid.
[56] Kenneth D. Bush and Diana Saltarelli, eds. "The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: Towards a Peacebuilding Education for Children," 23.
[57] Sobhi Tawil and Alexandra Harley. "Education and Identity-based Conflict: Assessing Curriculum Policy for Social and Civic Reconstruction," 9.
[58] Elizabeth A. Cole, "Introduction: Reconciliation and History Education," 13.
[59] Elizabeth A. Cole and Judy Barsalou, "Unite or Divide? The Challenges of Teaching History in Societies Emerging from Violent Conflict," USIP Special Report 163 (June 2006): 1, http://www.usip.org/files/resources/sr163.pdf, 1.

ethnically divided state.[60] In Guatemala, post-conflict education moved away from a hegemonic national identity to a history that highlighted the cultural diversity of the population.[61] Both processes can be seen in Mozambique, where the move toward instruction in local languages implies a certain disintegrative tendency but is intended to foster nationalism by rejecting the lingering influence of Portuguese culture.[62] Other common case studies include South Africa, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, and India, which suggests some of the diversity in post-conflict education based on the type of conflict experienced and the prevailing state of relations among the relevant groups. One common thread, however, is the role of history education as one piece of a larger reconciliation or transitional justice project. In Lebanon, the absence of such a project places an outsized burden on history education.

Education and National Identity in Lebanon

There is a robust literature on the problems of educational reform in Lebanon, and an embarrassment of riches when it comes to critiques of history education. Unfortunately these critiques are largely superficial, simply restating a small number of accepted paradigms without original primary source work. A small number of works in English and Arabic have looked at Lebanese history and civic education textbooks. The concept of "education for social cohesion" has guided a number of them in their analysis of the dysfunction of the Lebanese educational system and the best approach to reforming it. Maha Shuayb's edited volume *Rethinking Education for Social Cohesion,* distills some of the latest thinking on the potential of the social cohesion approach for reforming the education system. This volume builds on the work of a small group of Lebanese academics who have been writing on history education and the

[60] Sobhi Tawil and Alexandra Harley. "Education and Identity-based Conflict: Assessing Curriculum Policy for Social and Civic Reconstruction," 15.
[61] Ibid., 19.
[62] Ibid., 22.

surrounding problems for years, largely under the auspices of the Lebanese Association for Educational Studies (LAES). Chief among them is Adnan El-Amine, current president of LAES and a prodigious writer on a variety of topics pertaining to education in Lebanon, but others include Munir Bashshur and Nemer Frayha.

Frayha is one of the most interesting writers on this topic, having focused to a greater degree than anyone else on history education. His research has dealt with the intersection of social studies education and sectarianism since his 1985 thesis "Religious Conflict and the Role of Social Studies for Citizenship Education in the Lebanese Schools Between 1920 and 1983." He has authored a number of important articles since then concerning history and civic education and the difficult process of reform in these areas. His work is especially valuable because he brings a policymaker's perspective as well as an academic perspective. He served as director of the CERD during the 1990s, overseeing the latter part of the curriculum revision effort, and specifically the cancellation of the new history curriculum and textbooks mid-printing. He wrote a memoir in Arabic covering his time at the CERD as well as several articles detailing the political squabbles that took place within and among the CERD, the Ministry of Education, and outside pressure groups made privy to the process by virtue of their political clout. Nemer Frayha's work on mid-twentieth century Lebanese education has been supplemented by Nadya Sbaiti's 2008 dissertation, "Lessons in History: Education and the Formation of National Society in Beirut, Lebanon, 1920-1960s." She concentrated on education as a site of conflict over identity among the state and interest groups. Looking especially at notions of gender and citizenship, Sbaiti added an important perspective on the role of education in negotiating loyalties in Lebanon during the mandate and early independent republic.

A number of authors have examined the curriculum of civic education, a subject closely related to history in its supposed role in building national unity. Bassel Akar undertook an intensive study of the way the civic education curriculum was actually integrated in Lebanese schools, interviewing teachers and students to provide an in-depth look at how the new civic education curriculum affected notions and practices of citizenship among Lebanese youth. Above all he found that education for citizenship was hamstrung by the uninspiring pedagogy of the curriculum and the hypocrisy of a government text preaching values out of sync with the political system.[63] Antoine Messarra published another useful piece on the civic education curriculum, combining content analysis of textbooks with analysis of pedagogical techniques to comment on the coverage of human rights in the civic education curriculum.[64]

Conclusion

While history education has been written on by a number of scholars, the approach is usually either anthropological (involving ethnographic research and engagement with students and teachers) or excessively quantitative. There have also been a small number of excellent intellectual histories tracing the development of historical thought in Lebanon. However, history education is usually considered separately from the production of history. Historians writing on Lebanese historiography generally focus on the production of history within the academy, but in a sense they, like many historians, "underestimate the size, the relevance, and the complexity of

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[63] Bassel Akar, "Citizenship Education in Lebanon: An Introduction into Students' Concepts and Learning Experiences," *Educate* 7, no. 2 (2007): 2-18; and "Teacher Reflections on the Challenges of Teaching Citizenship Education in Lebanon: A Qualitative Pilot Study," *Reflecting Education* 2, no. 2 (2006): 48-63.
[64] Antoine Messarra, "Human Rights in Lebanese Textbooks and Curriculums," *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools* 8 (2005).

the overlapping sites where history is produced, notably outside of academia."[65] In this paper I provide a new perspective by concentrating on history education as a site for the production of history. I look at how particular textbooks negotiate the state curriculum to produce competing narratives within a relatively narrow field. Seeing curriculum as "a battleground in which cultural authority and the right to define what is labelled legitimate knowledge is fought over,"[66] I also bring out some of the historical narratives put forward in public debates surrounding the purpose and content of history education. With the passage of time, these debates have changed substantially from their classic form in the mandate and prewar period, but they are no less contentious. As much as disagreement about content, disagreement about the purpose of history prevents a successful unification of the history curriculum. Although the curriculum may remain unchanged, it still informs new editions of textbooks and inspires lively public debate, all of which constitutes a continuing process of historical production aimed at creating a history, or histories, of Lebanon.

[65] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 19.
[66] Stuart Foster and Keith Crawford, "Introduction: The Critical Importance of History Textbook Research," 20.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

> Every nationalist is haunted by the belief that the past can be altered. He spends part of his time in a fantasy world in which things happen as they should… and he will transfer fragments of this world to the history books whenever possible.[67]

There is no unified history textbook in Lebanon, but students suffer through history class all the same. Each school is left to decide what textbook to use to teach its students history, leaving the field open for privately published textbooks. Journalists, politicians, and academics from across the spectrum by and large agree that this situation tends to strengthen students' socialization into sectarian rather than national life. According to the scholarship on history education, the books are the key. Kamal Abouchedid and Ramzi Nasser wrote that "history teaching in Lebanon occupies a central position in the process of national integration,… negative intergroup relationships are exacerbated by biases and omissions in history texts,… [and] history is an important medium to transmit basic political values and inculcate a sense of national citizenship."[68] In this chapter I analyze the contents of a sample of textbooks to demonstrate how history is written from multiple perspectives for Lebanese students. The analysis itself is valuable in showing how Lebanese history is being written for the consumption of Lebanese students, and how this fits into the curriculum. I also argue that the narratives of these textbooks are constrained by a variety of factors, including the curriculum itself, the Baccalaureate exam, and the limited class time devoted to history.

Textbooks in Lebanon

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[67] George Orwell, "Notes on Nationalism," *Polemic* 1 (October 1945).
[68] Kamal Abouchedid and Ramzi Nasser, "The State of History Teaching in Private-Run Confessional Schools in Lebanon: Implications for National Integration," *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies* 5, no. 2 (2000): 58.

The responsibility for production of textbooks and curricula in Lebanon falls to the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD), also known as the Educational Center for Research and Development (ECRD), the Centre de Recherche et de Développement Pedagogiques (CRDP), or *al-markaz al-tarbawi li-l-buhuth wa-l-inma'*. It is a semi-autonomous institution under the minister of education, "enjoying financial and administrative independence."[69] Though it has a president, coordination with the minister takes place through an Advisory Board comprising the heads of departments, and its activities are divided into those needing the authority of the board only, of the minister of education, and of the cabinet.[70]

Official textbooks up to grade eight were published between 1968 and 1970, but no official textbooks for grades nine through twelve were ever published. Public schools are obliged by law to use any textbooks published by CERD, although in the subject of history, private schools may use either official textbooks when available (grades one through eight) or privately published textbooks approved by CERD. All secondary schools, public and private, use privately published textbooks at the secondary level because there is no official textbook, and in reality many public schools do not use the outdated CERD textbooks at the primary and intermediate levels.[71] Furthermore, while private schools are required to follow the official curriculum, they are also allowed to "choose techniques of teaching and add subject matters not included in the national curriculum as they see fit."[72]

There is no official list of approved history textbooks. According to Nemer Frayha, the process for getting a text approved is extremely loose. Publishing houses bring manuscripts to

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[69] CERD, "*Al-ta'rif bi-l-markaz*,"
[70] CERD, "*Sultat al-wasaya*,"
[71] Interview with Nemer Frayha, August 21, 2012, Zouk Mosbeh.
[72] Decree 1436, section 13, March 1950, quoted in Kamal Abouchedid and Ramzi Nasser, "The State of History Teaching in Private-Run Confessional Schools in Lebanon," 62.

CERD where one or two people read the textbook without correcting or editing it. If it follows the curriculum and "doesn't contain anything attacking any Lebanese community," it is signed and approved for distribution. The publishing houses then promote their textbooks directly to schools. Furthermore, it is "a common game" to get the CERD stamp on a textbook, change the book, and show the original stamp to schools. There is no government control or inspection of private schools in the realm of history.[73] This is the end result of a long history of laissez-faire policies toward private education in Lebanon. Under the French, the Ministry of Education was not empowered to inspect most private schools. The independent Lebanese government briefly attempted centralized inspection of private schools in the 1950s, but after the 1958 conflict authority was devolved to the governors of each of the six *muhafazat* (governorates). Moreover, public schools were to be inspected, while private schools were only to be supervised, an ambiguous designation leaving plenty of room for autonomy.[74]

When I visited CERD on August 23, 2012, I spoke with the assistant to the president in an effort to get in touch with those working with history curriculum and textbooks. She told me that there was no such department, since the center does not produce textbooks or curricula in that subject. This is presumably a new phenomenon, since the latest effort to create an updated curriculum and textbooks took place under the aegis of the minister of education, outside CERD. I asked her who was in charge of reviewing and approving private textbooks, since this was a necessary ongoing function of the center. She informed me that there was one woman who did so, but she was not available. When I pressed on, asking when she would return and how I could contact her, the president's assistant reluctantly informed me that the woman had retired and had

[73] Interview with Nemer Frayha, August 21, 2012, Zouk Mosbeh.
[74] Kamal Abouchedid and Ramzi Nasser, "The State of History Teaching in Private-Run Confessional Schools in Lebanon," 61-62.

not been replaced. I had no better luck looking into the existing curriculum. The CERD website includes the full text of the revised curricula for all subjects, as well as textbook information, but does not include even the outdated curriculum for history. Yet this curriculum from 1968 still guides the textbooks and the state examinations. The president's assistant made a number of phone calls for me trying to track down a copy of this curriculum (which is printed piecemeal in most textbooks). No one knew where it might be. In a conversation with someone she felt confident would have the information, I heard her say in Arabic, "We don't have it? But if we don't have it, who does?" In short, the agency responsible for the history curriculum faces serious limitations and shows evidence of having given up a large measure of authority in this regard.

Previous Studies

Two recent sets of studies have used content analysis of history textbooks to comment on variations in sectarian narratives of history. Jonathan Kriener in 2012 analyzed history textbooks at the intermediate level (grades 6 and 7) to compare their treatment of Lebanese history. He used three textbook series: one common in public and Makassed (Sunni) schools, one common in Mahdi and Mustafa (Shiite) schools, and one popular among Christian, secular, and Druze schools.[75] He attempted to explicate each series' general approach to history and specifically its vision of the history of Lebanon. The core of his analysis was based on the three textbook series' treatment of three key historical events: the Arab-Islamic conquest of the region, Lebanese independence, and the rise of Arab nationalism. He found significant differences on some of these issues, for instance the question of whether the conquest of Lebanon and Syria was Arab or

[75] Jonathan Kriener, "Different Layers of Identity in Lebanese Textbooks," in *The Politics of Education Reform in the Middle East: Self and Other in Textbooks and Curricula*, ed. Samira Alayan, Achim Rohde, and Sarhan Dhouib (New York: Bergahn Books, 2012), 136-137.

Islamic, and the relative merits of the three Abrahamic faiths. He found that "Islam, Christianity and Lebanese nationalism provide[d] for the master narratives" guiding the three series.[76]

Nonetheless, the texts were in relative harmony on a great number of issues. The majority of the historical narrative was the same, and only in a few cases did any of the books take openly contentious positions, for instance mocking Emir Fakhreddin as guileful and immoral.[77] Kriener was also concerned with pedagogy. He looked at whether the texts provided single or multiple perspectives, and whether activities were content oriented or process (skills) oriented. The texts made minimal use of sources and did not ask students to consider sources in their work. The dominant frame throughout was what Kriener called the "national Lebanese" frame of interpretation, but the Shiite series interpreted Lebanese independence itself through the lens of political Islam.[78] According to Kriener this constituted the most significant divergence, namely that Shiite texts represented Lebanese independence as a colonial imposition, while the others celebrated independence as a great achievement.[79] By way of conclusion, he declared that "a unified history textbook for all Lebanese schools, if this project should ever be re-started, makes sense only if it applies a comparative approach that provides different perspectives and trains students to understand them and distinguish them from another."[80]

Kamal Abouchedid and Ramzi Nasser undertook a study encompassing numerous aspects of history education in Lebanon. First, they dealt with the legal aspects of history teaching in Lebanon. Second, they analyzed history textbooks used in confessional schools to compare their interpretation of important historical events. Third, they evaluated the teaching of history in these

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[76] Ibid., 149.
[77] Ibid., and 146.
[78] Ibid., 143.
[79] Ibid., 148.
[80] Ibid., 150.

confessional schools, looking at relative time spent on specific content as well as practices "conducive to inter-group understanding."[81] Abouchedid and Nasser chose one school representing the Sunni, Shia, Druze, Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Protestant traditions. Each of those schools used one of four textbook series at the secondary level: The Pictured History (*Al-Musawwar fi-l-tarikh*), Modern Scientific History (*Al-tarikh al-hadith al-'ilmi*), The Complete in History (*Al-wafi fi-l-tarikh*), and The Enlightening History (*Al-mudi'i fi-l-tarikh*). In addition, all but one school used supplementary books taking up a wide variety of issues (Armenian history, ancient civilizations, global cultures, etc.).[82]

The authors investigated the relative weight of Lebanese versus Arab and European history, portrayal of Lebanese leaders and symbols, confessional biases, value for inter-group learning, and distortions of fact. They found that each of the approved books devoted a different proportion to each of the three major areas of the curriculum: modern Lebanese history, modern Arab history, and modern world history. Furthermore, schools allocated disproportionate numbers of class hours to these different areas, including in some cases spending as much time on supplementary texts as on approved texts. The study found significant disagreement among the texts on events in Lebanese history. For example, different texts ascribed blame for the devastating famine in Syria and Lebanon during World War I to the French, the British, the Ottomans, and/or local profiteers. Only one of the books attempted to explain the nature of pluralism in Lebanon and its effect on the political system, and none investigated the histories of and relationships among Lebanon's confessional communities.[83]

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[81] Abouchedid and Nasser, "The State of History Teaching," 58.
[82] Ibid., 69.
[83] Ibid., 70-71.

In a follow-up study with Jeremy Van Blommestein, Abouchedid and Nasser made an important contribution by investigating the attitudes of teachers, students, administrators, and policymakers about history education in the same confessional schools. Their conversations revealed significant displeasure with the current history curriculum, but the researcher concluded by placing blame on the policies of the schools themselves. Far beyond the constraints of the curriculum, confessional schools failed to promote multi-faith understanding. While students were by and large eager to learn more about other perspectives on history and religion, the schools failed to provide adequate opportunities for such learning in either instruction or extracurricular activities.[84] Abouchedid and Nasser concluded that "history teaching in Lebanon is not conducive to national integration," stressing three factors.[85] The substantial variation in texts is an obvious hurdle, as is the failure of the state to properly inspect schools and enforce education laws. Finally, history teaching encourages particular confessional loyalties rather than national integration. It is important to note here that this last point is based not only on variation in approved texts but in variation among completely unregulated supplementary texts and the relative weight given to different parts of the curriculum.[86]

Reading Textbooks

Textbooks are important because of both what they present to students as official knowledge and what they reveal about the custodians of that knowledge. Textbooks occupy a position of apparently neutral authority as the basis of classroom education. This is true even of history textbooks, which often speak with the same authority of those in mathematics and the

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[84] Abouchedid, Nasser, and Van Blommestein, "The Limitations of Inter-Group Learning: in Confessional School Systems: The Case of Lebanon," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (Fall 2002).
[85] Ibid., 74.
[86] Ibid., 75.

natural sciences despite the altogether different nature of historical knowledge. History textbooks must compete with countless other powerful agents of socialization, especially the family, the media, political parties, and religious institutions, but their place is somewhat unique. They may provide the only systematic approach to history for a student, and they merit attention by virtue of the classroom setting and the demands of testing. The claim to official knowledge gives the textbooks a special weight.[87] The form of the textbook, with its fixed content, lends it yet more authority. This "authority of print" leads many students to identify the textbook in theory, if not in practice, as the "ultimate reference source," capable of instilling fundamental ideas not easily undermined.[88]

The influence of textbooks, however, is mediated by other factors that challenge their authority. The views and pedagogical style of the teacher, selective readings of the text, supplemental materials, classroom setting, and other circumstances of the textbook's reception by the student combine with the already mentioned agents of socialization to limit the authority of the textbook. It is a nearly hopeless task to actually judge the effect of a textbook narrative against these factors, especially over the long term. In this paper I do not attempt to do so. Reading a textbook does not reveal what the student will learn, but it does reveal what its writers *want* the student to learn. Textbooks are socially constructed products of a process of writing that is itself political. They can thus be read as "cultural artefacts" revealing something of the context

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[87] Stuart Foster and Keith Crawford, "Introduction: The Critical Importance of History Textbook Research," in *What Shall We Tell the Children? International Perspectives on School History Textbooks*, 8.
[88] Elie Podeh, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict in Israeli History Textbooks, 1948-2000* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2002), 2.

from which they emerge.[89] According to Michael Apple, the narratives contained in history textbooks, as in all textbooks, reflect the views of powerful interest groups. The project is both cultural and political, as educational materials champion particular conceptions of culture that serve to entrench the political and economic interests of those who oversee their production.[90] They serve as a "justification of vested interests," disseminating the political perspectives of groups who stand to gain from particular narratives of history.[91] The differences in these visions bring out some of the competing interests of the groups vying for hegemony within the educational field.

The Curriculum

While the history curriculum in full is not easily accessible, the requirements for each grade are often printed in the front matter of private textbooks for that grade. Reflecting the confusion surrounding the curriculum, this section is slightly different in each of the twelfth-grade history textbooks. The Modern *Scientific History* cites Decree 9100 of August 1, 1968. The *Complete History* cites Decree 14528 of May 23, 1970. The *Clear History* cites Decree 4175 of August 2, 2000. This is the twelfth-grade history curriculum from the *Clear History*, the most up-to-date version and the one that most closely matches the content of the texts:

> First: The Modern History of Lebanon:
> Lebanon during the First World War –Transitional period – Declaration of the state of Greater Lebanon – French Military Rule – Lebanese Revolts – Constitution of the republic – Lebanon in the Second World War – Allied occupation of Lebanon – Declaration of independence.
> Second: Modern Arab History:

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[89] Stuart Foster and Keith Crawford, "Introduction: The Critical Importance of History Textbook Research," in *What Shall We Tell the Children? International Perspectives on School History Textbooks*, 8.
[90] Michael W. Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum: Third Edition* [Kindle edition] (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004), loc. 447, "Preface to the Second Edition."
[91] Ibid., loc. 991, "Chapter 1: On Analyzing Hegemony."

> The Arabs and the Ottoman State in the late nineteenth century – Turkification movement and Arab opposition – Disintegration of the Ottoman State – Rise of the Turkish Republic – Opening of the Suez Canal – English intervention and imposition of control over Egypt – Efforts toward independence and withdrawal of troops from Egypt – The Great Arab Revolt – The Syrian Arab Kingdom – French mandate – Syrian revolutions and the declaration of the republic – rise of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and rise of the Kingdom of Iraq – Liberation of the countries of North Africa.[92]

This stunted curriculum, separated from whatever original context from which it was drawn, provides only the bare minimum of information required to guide the process of teaching history. It provides only enough detail to suggest chapter headings for textbooks and nothing regarding goals or pedagogy. By contrast, the updated civic education curriculum runs to nearly twenty pages. It contains an introduction, general goals, standards, and specific goals and content guides broken down by year.[93] Following the abortive attempt to update the curricula in 2001, no legislation has superseded the temporary decree issued by Education Minister Abdel Rahim Murad canceling the reformed curriculum, leaving the field of history education technically unregulated. Given that vacuum, most schools have maintained the established habit of using privately produced textbooks and teaching from skeletal chunks of curriculum like the one above.[94]

The relationship between curriculum and textbook in Lebanon is especially interesting because there are two levels of production involved in the texts. The state has provided a minimal guide to the content of history instruction and left the execution to private textbook makers. The curriculum is the result of one process of social construction, while each textbook based on it is a product of a second set of "cultural, economic and political battles and

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[92] *Clear History*, no page.
[93] CERD, "*Manhaj madat al-tarbia al-wataniyya wa-l-tanshi'a al-madaniyya*."
[94] Jonathan Kriener, *Lebanese—But How? Secular and Religious Conceptions of State and Society at Lebanese Schools* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2011), 79.

compromises."[95] What follows is a reading of how four different textbooks for twelfth-grade history interpreted and negotiated the range of possibilities provided by the official curriculum.

The Sample

Nemer Frayha located 13 series (called *silsila* pl. *salasil*, "chains," in Arabic) of history textbooks in Lebanon in 1998 and estimates that there may be up to 20 now, although some are far more popular than others.[96] Out of a small collection of these books, I focus on four chains that were relatively widespread and popular. I used the texts for the twelfth grade, the third and final year of secondary school, because they deal with the history of modern Lebanon and the Arab world. The information on Lebanon overlaps largely with the ninth-grade curriculum, which is primarily concerned with modern Lebanon without extensive treatment of Arab history, but the information is more detailed and sophisticated.[97] Both of these grades culminate in state exams, lending additional weight to the textbooks for these years.

The *Modern Scientific History* (*Al-tarikh al-hadith al-'ilmi)* was published by Habib Publishers in 2010. Its authors are 'Ilm Younis 'Ilm, Munir Ilyas Salama, Ziyad Ghamrawi, and Kristian al-Hilu. Based on a rough, incomplete survey, this text is used at Lycée Abdel Kader[98] (a Mission laïque française school that was purchased by the Hariri Foundation in 1985[99]), Eastwood College (an independent school in Kfarshima offering the Lebanese and American

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[95] Stuart Foster and Keith Crawford, "Introduction: The Critical Importance of History Textbook Research," in *What Shall We Tell the Children? International Perspectives on School History Textbooks*, 4.
[96] Interview with Nemer Frayha, August 21, 2012, Zouk Mosbeh.
[97] Interview with Bassem Akl, August 24, 2012, Aley.
[98] Records of Librairie Antoine.
[99] Jonathan Kreiner, *Lebanese—But How?,* 82; "Annuaire des Établissements 2012-2013," Mission laïque française, http://www.mlfmonde.org/IMG/pdf/annu_mlf_12_13.pdf, 105.

systems[100]), the National Evangelical School in Nabatieh[101] (a Protestant Missionary School[102]), and an unidentified Greek Orthodox school (based on a study in which schools received code names[103]), among others. I will refer to this book within the text as the *Scientific History* so as to avoid confusion with the *Modern History of Lebanon and the Arab Countries*, which I will call *Modern History.*

The *Clear History* (*Al-tarikh al-wadhih*), published by Dar al-Maktaba al-Ahliyya in 2009, was written by Marwan Wehayyeb Abi Fadil and Michel Ghanim. It is used at, among others, the Universal College of Aley (a secular but predominantly Druze school),[104] and Collège Louise Wegmann[105] (an independent school in Beirut).[106]

The *Complete History* (*Al-wafi bi-l-tarikh*), published by Dar al-Fikr al-Lubnani in 2007, was written by Samir Jalul, Walid Al-Tawil, Ahmad al-Ratal, and ʻAli Badran. It is used at, among others, al-Iman School (a Sunni Islamic School in Beirut[107]), Rafic Hariri High School (a school in Saida founded by the Hariri Foundation without overt religious character[108]), Hussam

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[100] "Our Curriculum," *Eastwood College*, http://www.eastwoodcollege.com/Component/Curriculum/Index.asp.
[101] Correspondence with Amani Hamad, March 15, 2013.
[102] "Our History," *National Evangelical School in Nabatieh*, http://www.nesn.edu.lb/schoolhistory.php.
[103] Kamal Abouchedid and Ramzi Nasser, "The State of History Teaching in Private-Run Confessional Schools in Lebanon," 69.
[104] Interview with Bassem Akl, August 24, 2012, Aley.
[105] Records of Libraire Antoine.
[106] "Mission du Collège Louise Wegmann," *Collège Louise Wegmann,* http://www.clw.edu.lb/établissement/missions.aspx.
[107] "*Kalimat ra'is al-jama'iyya*," *Thanawiyyat al-Iman,* http://www.imansch.net/ar/default.asp?MenuID=6.
[108] "Mission/Philosophy," *Rafic Hariri High School*, http://www.rhhs.edu.lb/articles/templates/english.asp?articleid=65&zoneid=57&ParentZone=42&VMenuZone=57.

Eddine Hariri School (a Sunni Makassed school in Saida[109]), and al-Qalaa School (a secondary school in Saida[110]), along with an unnamed Armenian Orthodox school and an unnamed Protestant school (based on a study in which schools received code names).[111]

The *Modern History of Lebanon and the Arab Countries* (*Al-hadith fi tarikh lubnan wa-l-bilad al-'arabiyya),* by 'Abd al-Hussein Hawi, was published by Dar Barakat in 2008. It is used at Lycée Verdun[112] (a Mission laïque française school in the upscale Sunni neighborhood of Verdun in Beirut[113]), and al-Ahlieh School[114] (an independent school in Beirut[115]), among others. For convenience I will refer to this text as the *Modern History*.

Of course this does not represent all available textbooks, and several omissions are particularly glaring. First, a book called *Modern History* (*Al-tarikh al-hadith*), used for example in the Makassed School in Saida and the National Evangelical School for Boys and Girls, was only available at the publisher (Al-Asriya Library).[116] *The Pictured History* (*Al-Musawwar fi-l-tarikh*), published by Dar al-'Ilm li-l-Malayin, was available only for the tenth and eleventh grades, not for the twelfth. And finally the *Enlightening History* (*Al-mudi' fi-l-tarikh*), which I know to be used at one Shiite school system, also appears to be printed by a private press directly

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[109] "About Houssam Eddine Hariri High School," *Houssam Eddine Hariri High School*, http://www.mak-hhhs.edu.lb/English/Abouthhhs/AboutHHHS.htm
[110] "Saida—Al-Qalaa High School," *Geneco*, http://www.geneco.com.lb/?load=project&pct=Schools&pid=5.
[111] Kamal Abouchedid and Ramzi Nasser, "The State of History Teaching in Private-Run Confessional Schools in Lebanon," 69.
[112] Records of Libraire Antoine.
[113] "Annuaire des Établissements 2012-2013," *Mission laïque française*, http://www.mlfmonde.org/IMG/pdf/annu_mlf_12_13.pdf, 106.
[114] Correspondence with Amani Hamad, March 15, 2013.
[115] "History," *Al-Ahlieh School*, http://www.ahliahschool.edu.lb/SchoolInfoView.aspx?Category=35&Title=History.
[116] Correspondence with Amani Hamad, March 15, 2013.

for the schools.[117] Having access to those texts would have provided a substantially fuller sense of the most popular and widely dispersed texts. The following will have to merely suggest, rather than comprehensively catalog, the variation among Lebanese textbooks.

Content Analysis

The textbooks are by and large organized along the lines of the curriculum. In this section I will highlight several contentious issues in Lebanese history and analyze how they are treated in each book. Because the books follow the organization of the curriculum so closely, it is often possible to compare passages directly.

The Ottomans

The Ottomans are treated piecemeal in the history curriculum, complicating an effort to determine how each text evaluates their legacy. Since the timeline begins with World War I, the Ottoman conquest is mentioned only in passing if at all. The curriculum begins with the period of Hamidian reforms and focuses overwhelmingly on the situation in Ottoman Lebanon during World War I. The books cover in great detail the abuses and travesties of Jamal Pasha's brutal rule during World War I. This period of Ottoman domination of Lebanon under the Young Turks and the Three Pashas is by necessity described in negative terms, but unfortunately this does not provide much information on the perceived role of the longer stretch of rule by the Ottoman sultan.

The *Scientific History* claims that despite its vast geographic extent, the Ottoman Empire "carried the seeds of weakness and disintegration" because it had no unity of nationality, language, or religion. In the final analysis "the only unifier was the Ottoman Sultan, who

[117] Kamal Abouchedid and Ramzi Nasser, "The State of History Teaching in Private-Run Confessional Schools in Lebanon," 69.

exercised a rule of absolute dictatorship."[118] The Arabs made various attempts to achieve independence, but the Arab lands remained under Ottoman control because of "the religious connection and the status of the Ottoman Sultan as the Muslim Caliph."[119] Nonetheless, the Ottoman Empire is represented as having suffered from a decline from a better state to a more debased one in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. European powers took advantage of its weaknesses to capture territories from it, and relations between the Arabs and the Ottomans worsened significantly as a result of the rise of the Unionists in 1909.[120]

The *Scientific History* is scathing in its criticism of Jamal Pasha and the Ottoman policy in Lebanon during World War I. The awful conditions of the war were created by the separation of Lebanon from productive agricultural lands, the naval blockade imposed by the Allies, a plague of locusts, the Ottoman policy which blockaded the country on land and deprived it of doctors and resources and limited movement, and devaluation of the currency due to the Ottoman introduction of paper currency in place of gold.[121] The text acknowledges the role of the Allied blockade but casts no judgment on the Allies. On the other hand, "the Ottoman government saw Lebanon and the terrible wounds in its body, and it finished it off, cutting off wheat and other grains from all regions of Syria."[122] The text explicitly ascribes ill intent to the Ottomans and Jamal Pasha in particular.

There is a specifically Maronite angle to this story: "Jamal Pasha continued to pressure the clergy, and he converted some of the monasteries to military barracks, and determined to exile the Patriarch or to place him under house arrest, and his intention was to humiliate the

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[118] *Scientific History,* 104.
[119] Ibid*.,* 105.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid*.,* 18.
[122] Ibid*.,* 21.

largest Christian sect in Lebanon. News arrived in Europe, so his Holiness the Pope in Austria intervened in the Sultanate. The Patriarch met with Jamal Pasha in the summer of 1915 and made him understand that the Patriarchate was not a party in the war, but its purpose was to defend the interests of Lebanon. So the harassment of the Patriarch ceased."[123] The text also brings up Ottoman abuses of Christian minorities (the Armenians, Assyrians, and Chaldeans) during the war.[124]

The *Clear History* skips over the larger history of the late Ottoman Empire. Like the *Scientific History*, it heaps criticism on Jamal Pasha for his oppression of the Lebanese. However, it ties the sad tale of Jamal Pasha's abuses into the Lebanese nationalist march, as his oppression united the Lebanese of all stripes and encouraged them to work toward independence.[125] The text also credits foreign powers and philanthropic organizations with attempting to ameliorate the situation but finds that the help they could offer was minimal in the end. Some monasteries attempted to feed the hungry, including by selling their own property, but again this could not stem the tide of the hunger.[126]

The *Complete History* also elides the long stretch of Ottoman history and begins with the period of Abdul Hamid, who exercised "authoritarian rule."[127] In fact the chapter on "The Arabs and the Ottoman State" (titled the same in every text) launches almost immediately into a discussion of the *Nahda* and Arab efforts to achieve independence from the Ottoman Empire, after saying only that the Ottomans had begun to rule the Arab lands in the sixteenth century and

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[123] Ibid., 14.
[124] Ibid., 22.
[125] *Clear History*, 11.
[126] Ibid., 14.
[127] *Complete History,* 99.

then begun to weaken in the nineteenth.[128] As for Jamal Pasha, the text claims that he began to mistreat the Lebanese and the Syrians after his failures to capture the Suez Canal, which he blamed on the desertion of local soldiers. He subsequently imposed “a policy of mistreatment and terrorism.”[129] Opposition had already arisen among the Arabs, and the Lebanese in particular, to the policy of Turkification, “the goal of which was the destruction of the Arab identity and its national belonging.”[130] The text credits European powers, expatriates, and religious organizations, including the Maronite patriarch. It also mentions the Ottoman efforts at distributing wheat, which came as a result of European outrage over the state of the Lebanese population, but argues this effort was of limited use because it was marred by corruption.[131]

The *Modern History*’s account provides a somewhat different story: “When the Ottoman Army entered Lebanon, the Lebanese initially showed their good intentions and welcomed them with aid. But after the abuses of the Ottomans and the increasing injustices of Jamal Pasha, the Lebanese turned against them and opposed the policy of the Ottomans. Some of them formed political associations, to work against them, and some of them left the Ottoman army to join the ranks of the Arab Revolt, which began in June 1916 against the Turks.”[132] This version has two interesting features. First, it mentions that the Lebanese were positively predisposed towards the Ottomans when they arrived. This could serve simply to highlight their innocence of wrongdoing, but could also suggest a positive attitude toward Ottoman rule prior to the abuses of the Young Turk era. Unfortunately the text does not discuss the Ottoman rule of the Arab lands prior the Hamidian period. It describes the rise and fall of the Ottomans in relatively neutral

[128] Ibid., 98.
[129] Ibid., 14.
[130] Ibid., 16.
[131] Ibid., 21.
[132] *Modern History,* 7.

terms: "In late September 1918, the Ottomans began to leave (*rahil*) our country after staying (*makathu*) in it for around 400 years."[133] Second, it identifies opponents of Ottoman policy as political figures (by implication, Arab nationalists) as opposed to the Patriarch in the other accounts and incorporates the struggles of Lebanon into the larger Arab struggle by mentioning the emigration of Lebanese dissidents to fight in the Arab Revolt.

The Allied Victory and the Paris Peace Conference

The Ottoman defeat and the arrival of the Allies provide an opportunity for the texts to reflect on the disposition of what had been the *Mutasarrifiyya.* Most importantly, all of the texts refer repeatedly to the desires and views of the Lebanese regarding this process. The differences in the way these desires are represented should be revelatory given the bitter conflict among Arabists and Lebanists and the diversity of opinion in Lebanon and Syria at the time. Preparations for and responses to the Paris Peace Conference reflected significant differences in inclination among the inhabitants of what would soon become Greater Lebanon.

The *Scientific History* mentions that after the Ottoman withdrawal the Allies "rushed to occupy the coast of Lebanon and Syria," reflecting a tendency to push the distinction between Lebanon and Syria back before the creation of Greater Lebanon.[134] It praises the French army along with philanthropic organizations and religious missions for alleviating the awful social and economic condition of Lebanon in the period after World War I.[135] Nonetheless, the French were not all good: "The Allies had their ambitions in the East, and they had agreed on partition into zones of influence in the Sykes-Picot Agreement."[136]

[133] Ibid., 11.
[134] *Scientific History*, 25.
[135] Ibid., 26.
[136] Ibid., 25.

The first delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, drawn from the *Majlis al-Idara* of the *Mutasarrifiyya*, "decided to seek independence for Lebanon and the extension of its borders by returning what the *Mutasarrifiyya* detached (*sallakha*) from it."[137] The second delegation, which "represented the six major Lebanese sects (the Maronites, the Orthodox, the Catholics, the Sunna, the Shia, and the Druze), emphasized the independence of Lebanon, the return of the regions detached from it in 1861, the formation of a democratic Lebanese government, and cooperation with France."[138] This time the members of the *Majlis* visited the Patriarch Howayek, where "a popular demonstration took place asking that the patriarch take these demands to the Peace Conference in Paris, so the patriarch accepted the call."[139] After a stopover at the Vatican, Howayek arrived in Paris to present the demands of the people, among which were "the restoration of Lebanon to its natural and historical borders" and "the acceptance of French assistance on the condition that it not affect Lebanon's right of sovereignty."[140] The third delegation, led by the Bishop Abdullah al-Khouri, further "emphasized the widening of the borders, especially in regards to the Beqaa."[141] By and large the *Scientific History* seems to assume along with the delegations that the borders of modern Lebanon are organic.

The *Clear History* identifies three principal views on the future of Lebanon in the wake of the Ottoman defeat. The first was "the view of the population of Jebel Lubnan (the former *Mutasarrifiyya* of Lebanon), most of them Christian, and they demanded immediate independence after the return of the areas which were detached from it [Lebanon] in the *Mutasarrifiyya* system, that is, the four districts (Hasbaya, Rashaya, the West Beqaa, and

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[137] Ibid., 27.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid., 28.
[140] Ibid., 29.
[141] Ibid.

Baalbek), and the coastal cities (Beirut, Tripoli, Saida, and Tyre), with the acceptance of aid from France, as there was a historic relationship between her [France] and the people of the mountain."[142] Then there was the "view of the population of the areas of the *Wilaya* (the four districts and the coastal cities), most of them Muslim, and they demanded union with Syria, under the banner of Prince Faysal son of Sharif Husayn, provided that Lebanon enjoy autonomy."[143] And finally, there was a "view demanding the refusal of trusteeship under any state, with the demand for the independence of Lebanon and the return of the lands detached from it."[144]

The text explains that the proponents of the second option did not send a delegation of their own, as they were represented by Prince Faysal. There is no indication of a view supporting total union with Syria or a larger Arab state. The second delegation is again described as ecumenical (including "the six major Lebanese sects"), and Patriarch Howayek is brought on as its leader at the behest of a "popular demonstration."[145] Again his demands include that "France be the mandate authority, if imposing a mandate was necessary, on the condition that the mandate not conflict with sovereignty and independence."[146]

The *Complete History* mentions the detail that when the French arrived, they "protested the raising of the Arab flag in Lebanon, so General Allenby ordered it to be lowered…. French soldiers took power, and the French flag was raised over the Serail in Beirut and the Serail in Baabda."[147] The narrative thus includes a suggestion of the broken promise of Arab unity including Lebanon. The Paris Peace Conference had the weighty task of "considering the future

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[142] *Clear History*, 19.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid., 21-22.
[146] Ibid., 22.
[147] *Complete History*, 26.

of the peoples liberated from defeated states, like the Lebanese and the Syrians," but the cards were stacked against them. While the current represented by the US supported "the right of peoples to decide their fate," unfortunately "the other, represented by France and Britain, sought colonial domination."[148]

The *Complete History* identifies two trends in thinking about the future of Lebanon. The first, "representing most of the population of the *Wilaya* (*Wilayat* Beirut), called for the natural unity of Syria and its independence under the leadership of Prince Faysal, son of Sharif Husayn, and that if external assistance were necessary, it be from the United States or Britain. The second trend, "representing most of the population of the *Mutasarrifiyya* of Jebel Lubnan, called for widening the borders of the *Mutasarrifiyya* so that they include the areas detached from it under the Protocol, and for its independence, and that if external assistance or patronage were necessary, it be from France."[149]

The text goes on to explain "how the Lebanese expressed their positions in the Peace Conference," spending half a page on the position of the population of the *Wilaya*. They were represented by Prince Faysal, who "defended the Syrian cause, its independence, and its natural unity (Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, and Palestine)."[150] The population of the *Mutasarrifiyya*, on the other hand, sent three delegations to the Peace Conference. This account lacks the story of Patriarch Howayek heading the delegation by popular acclamation. Also notable is that in describing the patriarch's demands (among them "the return of areas detached from Lebanon under the Protocol"), the text does not mention its "natural" or "historical" borders. The same is true of the fourth delegation, in which Bishop Abdullah al-Khouri "focused on the need for

[148] Ibid.27.
[149] Ibid., 30.
[150] Ibid., 31.

annexing/uniting (*dhamm*) the Beqaa and the areas of Hasbaya and Rashaya to the new Lebanon."[151] The implication is that Syria had natural historical borders threatened by the coming separation of Palestine, Lebanon, and Transjordan, while if Lebanon had natural historical borders, they did not extend to the Beqaa.

The *Modern History* also includes the detail of the Arab flag: "As soon as the French entered Beirut, they objected to Arab rule, so De Piepape lowered, with Allenby's approval, the Arab flag from the Beirut Serail and took control of the city."[152] Its portrayal of the delegations to the Paris Peace Conference and the views of the Lebanese are rather balanced. It suggests four main positions among the Lebanese on the future of their country. The first was that of "the majority of the inhabitants of Jebel Lubnan," described as in the other texts but without the language of "natural" or "historical" borders.[153] The second position was that of "the inhabitants of the *Wilaya* and the coastal cities who called for unity with Syria with the preservation of self-rule."[154] The third position was that of Shukri Ghanim, president of the Syrian Central Committee, whose program "included achievement of natural Syrian unity, and French trusteeship over it." The fourth position was that of the Lebanese Union Party, which "called for the expansion of Lebanon's borders, rejected belonging under Faysali sovereignty in al-Sham, and rejected French mandate, demanding joint trusteeship of the major countries to ensure Lebanon's independence."[155]

The issue of "natural" borders poses a difficult problem here. The demands or views of various groups are usually provided in bullet points. This type of structure makes it difficult to

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[151] Ibid.32.
[152] *Modern History*, 12.
[153] Ibid.13.
[154] Ibid., 14.
[155] Ibid., 15.

read much into the terminology, because the (lack of) syntax obscures whether the textbook is advocating or simply reporting the understanding of "natural" borders. For example, when a text provides a bulleted list of Patriarch Howayek's demands, and one of the bullets is "the return of Lebanon to its natural borders," it is unclear whether the textbook authors agree that Lebanon's former larger borders are "natural" or are simply quoting him. At times the phrase clearly reflects the wording of a historical figure (though without quotation marks), at times it clearly reflects the phrasing of the author, and at times it is ambiguous. Still, the very inclusion of phrases like this is a powerful suggestion. Simply reporting Patriarch Howayek's position on Lebanon's borders, without qualifying whether they were in fact "natural" or providing another position, lends the weight of authority to that phrasing.

The treatment in these texts of the debates surrounding the Paris Peace Conference is especially interesting because it calls, in a very basic way, for an accounting of the ideological differences surrounding the historicity of Lebanon and the political question of its relationship to Syria. The *Scientific History* and the *Clear History* acknowledge the existence of a camp seeking unity with Syria, and they even locate it geographically, which could suggest to an astute student that the inhabitants of the future Lebanon outside the *Mutasarrifiyya* did not consider themselves Lebanese and were denied their wishes. Nonetheless, they represent all sides as having sought some amount of autonomy for "Lebanon," without either clarifying what that meant (the *Mutasarrifiyya,* or the expanded Lebanon desired by the Maronite establishment?) or acknowledging a desire for total union with Syria or a pan-Arab state. The *Complete History* and the *Modern History*, on the other hand, claim that the inhabitants of the *Wilaya* overwhelmingly supported total union with Syria, and the *Complete History* reverses the language of natural borders to imply that Lebanon was unnaturally severed from Syria. This dichotomy reflects the

very core of the classic historiographical debate surrounding the period, although only one text (the *Modern History*) records all sides of the debate without implicitly or explicitly endorsing one over the others. The variety of viewpoints here is not surprising, although it is worth noting that even the texts with a more Arabist tone do not reject the historicity of Lebanon.

The King-Crane Commission

The King-Crane Commission, the American fact-finding mission tasked with gauging Arab feelings about the disposition of former Ottoman territory, provides another opportunity for evaluating how the texts engage the historiographical debate. The *Scientific History* implies that all Lebanese wanted the return of areas not attached to the *Mutasarrifiyya* of Mount Lebanon to Lebanon,[156] and quotes Howayek on this.[157] The diversity of opinions in Lebanon according to the book spanned "from the independence of Lebanon and the widening of its borders with acceptance of French assistance, to complete independence without assistance from anyone, to independence with assistance from America or England, to making Lebanon an administratively autonomous district within a unified Syria."[158] Just as before, everyone in Lebanon wanted some form of distinct Lebanon.

The *Clear History* mentions the King-Crane Commission briefly in the context of the rise of the Arab Kingdom of Syria. Opposed by the French, the British, and the Italians, the commission reported the following recommendations: "maintaining natural Syrian unity and giving Lebanon wide-ranging autonomy within that unity."[159] Being a report only of the findings rather than the views on which they were based, this adds little to what the *Clear History* has already argued about views on post-Ottoman Lebanon.

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[156] *Scientific History*, 37.
[157] Ibid., 28.
[158] Ibid., 31.
[159] *Clear History,* 119.

The *Complete History* does not rehash the desires of the inhabitants of Lebanon but describes the King-Crane Commission's recommendations as follows: "natural Syrian unity and the establishment of a system of constitutional monarchy under Prince Faysal, and giving Lebanon its administrative autonomy within this unity," and "connecting Palestine to unified Syria, working to stop Jewish immigration, rejecting any claim of the Jews to create a national homeland for themselves there, and rejecting Jewish immigration to any part of Syria."[160] The text again here reflects a belief in the natural unity of Syria (including Palestine and Lebanon). It also broaches the subject of Zionist immigration, a pressing concern at the time but largely absent from the other textbooks.

The *Modern History* devotes a full page to the King-Crane Commission. It begins with Prince Faysal's suggestion of a commission to gauge the desires of the inhabitants of the Arab world, and President Wilson's support for such an idea despite Clemenceau's opposition and Lloyd George's cool response. The text mentions the commission's journey through the Arab world but mentions only the views of the Lebanese: "Some of them called for independence under French guardianship, another group called for autonomy under Syrian unity, and a third group called for independence without subjection to anyone, international or Arab."[161] Given the demands of the people, the King-Crane Commission recommended "self-rule within the framework of Syrian unity, but the decision was neglected… leaving the door open to its demise before Britain and France to achieve their colonialist ambitions in the Arab East."[162]

The representations of the King-Crane Commission in the texts largely mirror their understandings of Lebanese views at the moment of Ottoman defeat (they were, after all, only a

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[160] *Complete History* 33.
[161] *Modern History*, 15.
[162] Ibid.,16.

year apart). In the context of the commission's recommendation for Lebanese autonomy within a unified Syria, the *Modern History* allows the Arabist perspective to fall out, while the *Complete History* reports "administrative autonomy" (*al-istiqlal al-idari*) rather than autonomy (*al-istiqlal al-thati dumna al-wahda al-suriyya*), as the *Modern History* describes it.

The French Mandate

The influence of the French mandate on Lebanese political, social, and economic life is incalculable, but its legacy is ambiguous. Unlike some other issues on which clear positions can be defined, the French mandate inspires ambivalence even among some of those deeply enamored of French culture. According to the *Scientific History*, "The French mandate authority… dominated political life, exploiting the sectarian structure of Lebanon. Most Lebanese opposed this policy and demanded national rule and independence."[163] Despite this opposition (and French domination of the economy), the French brought a great number of improvements to Lebanese society: "In the period of direct mandate rule the foundations were laid for a modern state, its institutions, and its administrative and financial systems. Interest in architecture also arose, roads were paved, and electricity and water projects were carried out, in addition to the dissemination of education and the opening of official schools. France spread its language and its culture in Lebanon and Syria."[164] Even as the text praises French economic and political projects, it does not comment on the impact of the spread of French language and culture.

The *Clear History* also includes a section on the attitude of the Lebanese toward the mandate. One group of Lebanese accepted the mandate "as the lesser of two evils, provided that it was a stage leading them toward independence, and set about improving its conditions and

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[163] *Scientific History*, 36.
[164] Ibid.

mitigating its disadvantages and damages as much as possible."[165] The other refused and "demanded immediate independence," a current represented by the Administrative Council. The text includes the story of the delegation sent by the council that was intercepted, arrested, and exiled by the mandate authorities.[166] The good and bad of the mandate are both apparent: "There is no doubt that France, during its mandate over Lebanon, laid the foundations of the modern state, establishing official institutions, organizing the administration, paving roads, securing electricity and water, opening official schools, and spreading its language and culture…"[167] On the other hand, there is a long list of complaints: French monopolies and control over the economy and customs revenues, domination of political life, delays in writing the constitution, abuses of the High Commissioner, and more. Thus "the Lebanese opposed this policy and demanded independence."[168]

According to the *Complete History*, the decisions of the San Remo Conference "met with refusal from many Lebanese, and members of the Administrative Assembly of the *Mutasarrifiyya* tried to coordinate with the government of Damascus to form a join delegation to travel to Europe." The text describes how these members were arrested on the road to Damascus, "tried on charges of treason and conspiracy, and sentenced to exile on the island of Corsica."[169]

The *Complete History* introduces the French mandate with a laundry list of complaints, arguing that the mandate system "neglected many fundamental and crucial matters," among them the length of the trusteeship, the administrative organization of the state, and any kind of

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[165] *Clear History*, 31.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid.
[169] *Complete History*, 34.

preparation for self-governance.[170] Furthermore, "the mandate authorities did not abide by the contents of the mandate, even despite its many flaws."[171] The constitution was delayed and unsatisfactory, French business interests dominated the economy and agriculture, the French gave up Iskandarun and southern Lebanon, Frenchmen stole artifacts and took them to Paris, and more. The good points seem to get lost in the bad: for instance, "it is true that the French applied the first article of the mandate, the writing of a constitution, but the constitution gave the High Commissioner broad powers."[172]

As an aside, the *Complete History* unleashes a bitter screed against the hypocrisy and duplicity of the Europeans. Those who naively celebrated the removal of the Turkish yoke and the dominance of Europe "overlooked the fact that the Europeans are a hard-hearted and ruthless (*ghilaz al-akbad*) people, who deny today what they announced yesterday, and break their promises, and care for nothing but their own interest, and sacrifice a people completely to fulfill their ambitions." England agreed with France to "divide the spoils among themselves." Subsequently the United States, "after seeing the greed and ambitions of Europe, abandoned its place at the Peace Conference and sat in isolation, leaving no one at the center of the fray but the English and the French, both of them colonialist, greedy, and ambitious."[173] This type of extended editorializing is uncharacteristic of any of the other books.

The *Modern History* shares with the *Scientific History* and the *Clear History* a mixed evaluation of the French mandate, but unlike them speaks more of change than of benefit. In fact, more than the other three texts, the *Modern History* maintains a rigid neutrality. Its depiction of the birth of the mandate shows how this attempt at neutrality can be strained by competing

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[170] Ibid., 38.
[171] Ibid., 39.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid., 28.

historical claims. It states that at San Remo the Allies decided to “remove natural Syria from Ottoman authority and divided it into three pieces: Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine.”[174] The reasons for the establishment of Greater Lebanon include “the demands of the Lebanese for independence and the inclusion of the lands removed from their country during the *Mutasarrifiyya* period,” French promises to honor these demands, the imposition of the mandate by force in Syria, and the unwillingness of Syrians to accept the mandate. In light of all this, “after being convinced that the geographic composition of the Mutasarrifiyya was not viable, the French decided to respond to the demands of the Lebanese and establish an expanded Lebanese state, that is, Greater Lebanon.”[175] This narrative assumes a unity of desire among the Lebanese for an independent, expanded Lebanon under French control. Despite the language of natural Syrian unity in regards to San Remo (and elsewhere), the establishment of Greater Lebanon is seen as the logical result of the desires of its inhabitants. These inhabitants were previously assigned a variety of views, but they have been compressed here in such a way that the French creation of Greater Lebanon is made to reflect Lebanese public opinion. Along with the text’s representation of the King-Crane Commission, this reveals a certain tension in its treatment of this period. Striving for balance but with an Arabist inclination, the text includes indications of the real opposition to the project of Greater Lebanon at various points. As a Lebanese history, however, it also accepts the legitimacy of Lebanon and the narrative of Greater Lebanon as the realization of Lebanese demands.

The texts say a great deal about the mandate period, but these excerpts suffice to suggest the basic differences in attitude. The power of the nationalist narrative forces the *Scientific History* and the *Clear History* to criticize French political domination even as they celebrate the

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[174] *Modern History*, 17.
[175] Ibid., 20.

benefits of French civilization for Lebanese development. The *Complete History* rejects the mandate as an unmitigated disaster for Lebanon, while the *Modern History* calls it "dictatorial" in its early years and simply lists its initiatives without praise.[176]

The Palestinians and Israel

The story of the Palestinians and the creation of the state of Israel is an important element of the twentieth-century history of the Arab world. It is also a particularly fraught one, especially in Lebanon. I therefore sought out mentions of the Palestinians, Israel, and Zionism, but references were exceedingly rare. The curriculum does not specifically call for mention of any of them, though it calls for coverage of Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and North Africa.[177] The Palestinian issue used to be a part of the curriculum promulgated in 1968, but it was subsequently removed.[178] All of the texts do mention the Balfour Declaration, each one providing the essential facts (that it was a letter sent by Lord Balfour to the Zionist Lord Rothschild and subsequently implemented), a brief excerpt, and little else.

According to the *Scientific History* The Zionist movement "exploited the conditions of World War I, providing aid to the allies in exchange for establishing a national home in Palestine. The English considered it in their interest to create a loyal state north of the Suez Canal."[179] Thus came the Balfour Declaration, "which gives further evidence of the Allies' denial of their commitments related to the Arabs."[180] The *Clear History* says next to nothing about the Palestinians and provides only a bare-bones factual account of the Balfour Declaration

[176] Ibid., 23-25.
[177] *Clear History*, no page.
[178] *Complete History*, no page; *Scientific History*, no page.
[179] *Scientific History*, 125.
[180] Ibid.

(an excerpt from the letter, with the information that it was applied by the British).[181] The *Complete History* argues that the British "were determined to occupy Palestine to substitute it for Egypt in protecting the Suez Canal" and to turn it into "a bridge carrying them into the heart of the Arab countries whenever and wherever they wanted, subjecting them [the Arab countries] to their will, which no one dared resist. And they contrived to make this occupation permanent, [along with] the Zionist question, and the establishment of a Jewish national home."[182] The *Complete History* includes other references to Israel-Palestine, for instance in the previously discussed passage surrounding the King-Crane Commission. The *Modern History* included a mild rebuke of the British regarding the Balfour Declaration: "Issuing this promise, and placing Palestine under British mandate, represents a betrayal on Britain's part, not only of the Arabs, but of the Allies as well."[183] It is worth noting that all of the texts (with the possible exception of the *Clear History*) interpret the Balfour Declaration in terms of British imperialism, two with reference to the danger of Zionism, and none with reference to the Palestinians themselves. It would arguably be ahistorical to bring up Palestinian expulsion with the Balfour Declaration (since large-scale Palestinian expulsion would not take place until decades later), but in a curriculum with no mention of Palestinians, this seems as good a place as any. It is likely that the deep-seated conflict over the place of the Palestinians in Lebanese society discourages discussion of the issue when the curriculum itself does not call for it.

Gamal Abdel Nasser

Gamal Abdel Nasser provides a particularly interesting case because he represents the latest chronological moment covered by all the texts. He was also a controversial figure, and

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[181] *Clear History*, 29.
[182] *Complete History*, 28.
[183] *Modern History*, 72.

opinions of him were divided largely along the sectarian lines that divided Lebanese historiography. The Christian Lebanists strongly opposed Nasser, while he was popular among largely Sunni Arabists, a conflict that played a large part in the civil war of 1958. It also seems that the narratives regarding Nasser are not as tightly linked to the specific demands of the curriculum and the exam, so a bit more editorial license is apparent.

The *Scientific History* devotes less than one paragraph to Nasser in about a page and a quarter concerning the demands of the Egyptians after the end of World War II. The text includes much more detail about the revolution itself, lists all of the Free Officers, and mentions Muhammad Naguib's presidency before moving on to Nasser. The one full sentence on Nasser informs the reader that "his era was full of domestic and foreign events (nationalization of the Suez Canal, The Tripartite Aggression on Egypt in 1956, unification with Syria, the war with Israel in 1967….)."[184] Nasser himself is made nearly invisible in the momentous changes taking place in Egypt in the mid-twentieth century.

The *Clear History* spends half a page (without mentioning Nasser) on the Free Officers Revolt and its results, including the Anglo-Egyptian withdrawal from Sudan, the withdrawal of British troops from Egypt, the new constitution (and here it mentions Nasser for the first time!), and the nationalization of the Suez Canal. We then read that "President Gamal Abdel Nasser ruled Egypt until his death in 1970, and during his era the 1967 Arab-Israeli War took place, and Israel occupied the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank in Palestine, and the Golan in Syria."[185] This is not an especially flattering portrayal of his tenure.

The *Complete History* treats the Free Officers' Revolution quickly and says nothing about Nasser's domestic policies, but it gives more detail of Nasser's activities abroad. It

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[184] *Scientific History*, 142.
[185] *Clear History*, 148.

mentions the nationalization of the Suez Canal, “which resulted in the Tripartite Aggression.” It then covers the 1967 war: “Israel carried out a surprise attack on Egypt and Jordan and Syria, occupying the Sinai Desert and reaching the Suez Canal.” But in 1973, “The Egyptians managed to liberate the Suez Canal, and after that negotiations took place between Egypt and Israel.” The text goes on to describe Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem and ends with the Camp David Accords.[186]

The *Modern History* devotes over a page to Gamal Abdel Nasser and his revolution, listing in detail his achievements and innovations. He is portrayed as a successful reformer, establishing a republic with greater social and economic equality to replace the corrupt regime of the king. The text recounts the noble goals of the revolution and its results, including “finally freeing Egypt from British occupation” and “supporting liberation movements in the Arab world.”[187] It does not mention the 1967 war (or the Tripartite Aggression, for that matter) and ends the chapter without mentioning Nasser’s death or the presidencies of Sadat and Mubarak.

The coverage given to Nasser varies widely, as does the role he is made to play in Egyptian politics. The *Scientific History* and the *Clear History* seem content to ignore Nasser to the extent possible, while the *Complete History* and the *Modern History* link him with momentous changes in Egypt and the greater Middle East.

Hafez al-Asad

Although the curriculum ends around 1968, some books have taken it upon themselves to cover some period after that year. Unfortunately, though every book has a chapter devoted to the history of Syria, Hafez al-Assad is mentioned in only two, and then only briefly. At the end of the chapter on Syria, the *Scientific History* mentions that Hafez al-Asad took power in 1970, that Syria fought a war with Israel in 1973 in which it recaptured Quneitra, and that in 2000 Hafez’s

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[186] *Complete History*, 161.
[187] *Modern History*, 111.

son Bashar took power.[188] According to the *Clear History*, "General Hafez al-Asad became president of the republic in 1970 until his death in 2000, when his son Doctor Bashar was elected president of the republic."[189] The *Modern History* of Lebanon and the *Complete History* end their coverage of Syria with the withdrawal of French troops in 1946.[190] The two texts that mention the Asad regime use neutral words and brief, fact-based sentences. This suggests a kind of hesitant chronicle approach to issues beyond the scope of the curriculum.

Synthesis

The character and historical perspective of each of these texts should be evident from the preceding discussion. Remarkable similarities exist between the *Scientific History* and the *Clear History*, with some long passages using nearly (or even precisely) the same phrasing. There are no common authors, and the publishing houses are different. It is unclear whether the overlap is due to borrowing or plagiarism, or to some other factor. It could well be that the text is based on answer keys to the Bac exams, with multiple authors having access to these keys and reproducing the exact wording where possible. This would certainly fit the pedagogical paradigm of history which, having not been updated with the other curricula in the 1990s, is based on rote memorization.[191] Regardless, the two texts share a general perspective on the history of Lebanon. Both largely accept the basic Lebanist position of a natural Lebanon separate from Syria. They tend to downplay the Arab aspect of Lebanese history and accept the advantages of European science and culture, though not direct European rule. They also display a tendency to merge Lebanese and Maronite history in the early chapters and a preoccupation with the Christian nature of Lebanon, though not to an extraordinary degree.

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[188] *Scientific History*, 153.
[189] *Clear History*, 127.
[190] *Modern History*, 87; *Complete History*, 138.
[191] Interview with Bassem Akl, August 24, 2012, Aley.

The most unique text is the *Complete History*, which tends to display an Arabist perspective and is especially critical of the machinations of the European powers. However, even the *Complete History* frequently incorporates elements that subvert a thoroughgoing Arabist narrative. The text concedes the historical reality of Lebanon and does not question its independent trajectory from the rest of Greater Syria, though it suggests a powerful historical affinity between Lebanon and Syria. It also gives more attention to the fact that the creation of Greater Lebanon was a contested political event rather than the realization of the Lebanese will. The *Complete History* also breaks out of the traditional mold of objectivity. While the other texts use loaded terms like "authoritarian" and "betrayal" uncritically, only the *Complete History* sets aside significant space for ideological positions and condemnations.

The *Modern History* is unlike the *Scientific History* and the *Clear History* in that it expresses an awareness of challenges to an inevitable trajectory of Lebanese independence. Its perspective is often, but not always, more in line with the *Complete History*. Very much unlike that text, however, it avoids loaded terms and seems especially devoted to maintaining an air of neutrality. In general the texts often seem to be going out of their way to avoid being offensive or putting forward a tendentious account (even at times the *Complete History,* which did not mask its perspective but also did not take up any especially controversial positions). In this context it bears repeating that the *Complete History* is used at a number of avowedly Sunni schools in my small sample, though also at some Christian and independent schools.

The textbooks demonstrate significant divergence on some issues, but even in the most extreme cases they do not move far beyond a restricted area of respectful debate. None are openly sectarian, none denigrate any religion or internal political force, and none accuse other narratives of being lies (by and large, they simply avoid mentioning other narratives). By Nemer

Frayha's estimation, most textbooks take a compromise position, without going to extremes.[192] This is borne out by the analyses of these books. By and large the texts are inoffensive even while suggesting disagreement on some of the same issues that have bedeviled historians of Lebanon for decades, like the nature of Ottoman and French rule.

A partial explanation for the general agreement among the texts is that the material is circumscribed by the curriculum. Often the books are almost completely identical, down to the same headings and subheadings. I believe this has quite a bit to do with the demands of the Baccalaureate exams during the final secondary year. These exams follow the curriculum closely, and the constraints of only one hour per week for history limit the amount of extra material a book might include. I acquired a history and geography study book for Brevet prep, as well as an abbreviated history text designed for Baccalaureate prep. These books were organized by questions likely to appear on the exam (as they had appeared before, and questions seem to be recycled), followed by answers in lengthy bullet points. Not unsurprisingly, these bullet points matched almost precisely the organization found in the full history texts. For instance, the Bac study book begins with the question, "During the First World War, Jamal Pasha took abusive measures with the goal of eliminating the independence the *Mutasarrifiyya* of Jebel Lubnan enjoyed during the political system of the 'Protocol' of 1861. What were the most important of these measures, and show the position of the Lebanese toward them."[193] The answer to the first part of the question, in brief: The occupation of Mount Lebanon by Ottoman armies, replacement of the *Mutasarrif*, dissolution of the Administrative Council, forcing the Maronite patriarchs and bishops to request a *firman*, removal of foreign privileges, imposition of forced labor and conscription, confiscation of goods and property, dissolution of political associations and

[192] Interview with Nemer Frayha, August 21, 2012, Zouk Mosbeh.
[193] *Al-dalil al-wadih,* 5.

punishment of their members, and establishment of military courts for show trials.[194] By comparison, in its lengthier discussion of "the political situation in Lebanon during the First World War," the *Scientific History* includes the following sections relating to "the repeal of the provisions of the Protocol of 1861 and destroying its autonomy": the entry of Ottoman troops in the mountain, replacement of the Christian *mutasarrif*, dissolution of the Administrative Council, harassment of Maronite clergy, military courts and conscription and forced labor, and execution of members of political societies.[195] The difference can hardly be coincidental. It seems clear that these texts are responding to the known test questions as well as the curriculum more generally and therefore working within the bounds of what is considered acceptable history by the state.

This logic of following the curriculum largely outweighs that of advocating distinct sectarian narratives in these texts. The lack of a unified textbook provides broad opportunity for private publishers to put forward their own stories, but their possibilities are bounded by the demands of the curriculum and the examinations based on it. Divergence from the accepted history would jeopardize the students' Bac grades, which are vital for college admissions. Interviews with students and teachers in history classes have confirmed a preoccupation with memorizing information to score well on exams.[196] This logic is weaker for grades with no terminal exam, but the state-sponsored narrative nonetheless exerts itself through educational pressures, and the two years with terminal exams (nine and twelve) both cover modern Lebanese and Arab history.

This unity of purpose and relatively restricted bounds of debate do not necessarily hold true for other textbooks. Largely for reasons of access, the schools that I can verify as using these

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[194] Ibid.
[195] *Scientific History,* 12-14.
[196] Kamal Abouchedid and Ramzi Nasser, "The State of History Teaching in Private-Run Confessional Schools in Lebanon," 74.

texts are largely elite and independent. I did not have access to any texts that I know to be used in Shiite schools. The Shia represent not only the largest sectarian group but perhaps the one most likely to be using high-quality mass-produced texts of an openly ideological nature, given the increasingly central role of Hizbullah in education.[197] This means that even within the limited parameters I have set up (the content of privately published textbooks, rather than the actual content of teaching in classrooms), I do not have access to the full story. Nonetheless the texts that I have analyzed are extremely popular and can be found in use among a great number of Lebanese students. Even as a part of the story, they tell us something important about the way history is being produced for consumption by Lebanese students. They suggest at least the potential unifying power of a centralized curriculum and exams for limiting the range of narratives in privately published textbooks.

Can the Textbook Speak?

It is important to reiterate that this paper is not making claims about what students are learning in schools or how they are engaging that material. That topic falls outside the scope of this project and would require significant ethnographic research. My analysis serves only to investigate some of the narratives sanctioned and put forward by publishers and school administrators in order to better understand the problem of multiple competing histories. Without actually going into the classroom, there is no way to tell how any text is mediated by the teacher and received by the students. In fact, there is no way to tell whether the book is used at all, or if it is used but undermined by the teacher or by supplemental materials. By comparison, the editorial

[197] See, for example, Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and the Making of National Identities.*

license of teachers, aided by supplementary teaching materials, challenges and limits the homogeneity of content in civic education classes.[198]

Education scholar Adnan El-Amine claimed that in some cases history is not taught at all except for the two years that culminate in the Brevet and Baccalaureate exams, because these are the only times when an outside force (the test) obliges schools to teach the history curriculum. Schools often use a variety of improvised materials: old and outdated texts, photocopies, and extra educational materials.[199] One teacher I spoke with, a social studies coordinator at a private high school in Aley with a predominantly Druze student population, echoed the idea that the textbook is only one among many resources used in the classroom. In his classes, for example, he uses the main textbook along with materials from other textbooks, his own personal library, CDs and visual aids, and other educational resources. The curriculum for eleventh grade covers only World War II while the tenth grade curriculum covers the ancient world, so he spends the first week of eleventh grade teaching World War I from personal knowledge and outside materials.[200]

The relationship between the textbook content and political biases within schools should not be taken as a given either. Textbooks are written not only for ideological reasons but for financial reasons as well. There is a strong economic incentive to publish a popular history textbook, which may work against exaggerated ideology. The choice of textbook at the school and school system level has specific economic dimensions as well. A school's choice of textbook may represent a significant investment for students and significant profit for a publisher, and business deals in Lebanon are often mediated by *wasta*, which encompasses nepotism, cronyism,

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[198] El-Amin, "Educational Reform: Nine Principles and Five Issues," *Options for Lebanon*, ed. Nawaf Salam (New York: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 2004): 219.
[199] Interview with Adnan El-Amine, August 22, 2012, Beirut.
[200] Interview with Bassem Akl, August 24, 2012, Aley.

and all sorts of informal connections. Choice of textbook may rely on connections between school administrators or teachers on the one hand and publishers, bookstores, or textbook authors on the other.[201]

Because of all these factors, even a unified textbook would not necessarily mean unity in educational experience. Scholars recognize that such a book would be of little value if it simply called for rote memorization of a nationalist narrative of history without engaging the student.[202] The role of teachers and pedagogy would have to be addressed as well. Given the current testing system, there could be no guarantee that a unified textbook, representing years and years of political conflict and compromise, would even be used in most classrooms.

The Case of Civic Education

The experience of the civic education curriculum suggests some of the challenges that a unified history curriculum could still face even if the process were to be completed. The civic education curriculum represents another space in education for encouraging national unity alongside history (as enshrined in the Ta'if Agreement), but unlike history it was successfully updated and implemented in the 1990s. The curriculum includes a great variety of content, ranging from appropriate relationships with family members and classmates to the importance of preserving nature. Much of it has little to do with the specific experience of Lebanon. Especially in the higher grades, the civic education curriculum focuses primarily on the structures of government, rights and duties of a citizen, and civil society.

Among the curriculum's goals is to "strengthen [the student's] attachment to his Lebanese identity and to his land and to his nation in a united and collaborative political

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[201] Interview with Nemer Frayha, August 21, 2012, Zouk Mosbeh.
[202] Adnan El-Amin, "Educational Reform," 221.

democratic framework."[203] The work done in the textbooks toward this goal, however, is piecemeal and largely incoherent. The seventh grade civic education text deals with topics related to "the nation and national identity": "the concept of the nation and its elements, [and] national values: the defense of sovereignty, solidarity to protect independence, respect for the symbols of the nation, the maintenance of national pride, the will to live and build a common future, belief in a common destiny."[204] Very few of these aspects take on a particularly Lebanese character. The textbooks provide no cogent notion of Lebanese identity (as opposed to Arab identity), and they portray a harmonious Lebanese political life as a reality rather than a goal to be strived for.

The Lebanese identity put forward by the civic education textbooks is in no way distinctly Lebanese. They argue for a Lebanese identity based on shared language, history, and interests but fail to provide a clear picture of what those might be.[205] They avoid any systematic discussion of history, with certain historical events appearing arbitrarily, separated from their contexts. The textbooks also argue that Arab identity is based on a shared history and heritage, the Arabic language, economic integration, and shared aspirations.[206] Similar language describes the special Lebanese-Syrian relationship, which is "based on the roots of a shared Arabic language, common educational and cultural and economic interests. . . [and] throughout history, a common destiny, a shared experience of colonialism, and bonds of national destiny in the struggle against the Ottomans and the French, and in their shared resistance to the Zionist

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[203] CERD, "*Manhaj madat al-tarbia al-wataniyya wa-l-tanshi'a al-madaniyya*."
[204] Ibid.
[205] Shafiq Muallim et al., *Al-tarbia al-wataniyya wa-l-tanshi'a al-madaniyya*, 98.
[206] Suleiman Zeineddin et al., *Al-tarbia al-wataniyya wa-l-tanshi'a al-madaniyya*, 119-120.

enemy."[207] Since there is no discussion of a particularly *Lebanese* language, history, or interests, there is apparently no difference between Lebanese identity, Syrian identity, and Arab identity.

The value of the texts for encouraging national unity also suffers from a tendency to view national unity as a cherished achievement rather than a goal or a process. Internal conflict is dehistoricized and contrasted with the prevailing peace: "Lebanon has been engulfed by wars and events that have destroyed homes, ruined villages and cities, killed and separated and displaced many families, and devastated the pillars of the national economy in agriculture, production, and services. . . However, the consciousness of the citizens and their belief that Lebanon is a homeland for all Lebanese, triumphed in the end, and harmony and love and peace for all prevailed."[208] The idea that all conflict is past prevents real engagement with the challenges of citizenship in Lebanon. Despite purporting to teach about Lebanon's system of government, the textbooks hardly ever deal with confessionalism. The concept is avoided most likely in an attempt to prevent controversy,[209] but students cannot be expected to understand the Lebanese political system without understanding its basis in confessionalism. Furthermore, this kind of fairytale of Lebanese unity undermines the credibility of the text. Lebanese students are politicized from an early age and aware of the deep divisions in Lebanese politics. A text that seems ignorant of these divisions would be hard pressed to retain any kind of authority.

In a series of studies, Bassel Akar identified a number of problems undermining civic education: disparity between the abstract concepts in textbooks and the reality of life in Lebanon, rote learning in a subject predicated on active learning, and a tendency to avoid topics that might

[207] Ibid., 127.
[208] Shafiq Muallim et al., *Al-tarbia al-wataniyya wa-l-tanshi'a al-madaniyya*, 113.
[209] Jonathan Kriener, *Lebanese—But How? Secular and Religious Conceptions of State and Society at Lebanese Schools*, 242.

spark political debates.[210] Jonathan Kriener found through a series of interviews with private school administrators that the civic education curriculum was followed only loosely, partly for "ideological reasons" and partly for the curriculum's "extensive amount of information, its didactic awkwardness, and lack of relevance."[211]

The weaknesses of the civic education curriculum are instructive for the prospects of a unified history curriculum. Should the process succeed, and a unified curriculum and textbooks be used in all Lebanese schools, the impact on national unity is hard to guess. Much will depend on the quality and the approach of the texts, but the civic education example suggests that the texts may do little to achieve the stated goals of the curriculum. The books will have to be accepted and used by the teachers without recourse to supplementary or replacement material undermining the official content. And they will have to walk the fine line between excessive controversy (which can encourage teachers to skip sections in order to avoid conflict) and excessive sanitation (which runs the risk of undermining the credibility and utility of the texts).

In short, the influence of existing textbooks and a potential unified textbook is limited. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to examine the textbook contents for several reasons, not least of which the existing evidence that despite their limitations, textbooks maintain an aura of authority that can deeply influence students. This content analysis sheds light on some of the narratives with which (or around which) schools, teachers, and students are required to work, and shows how the curriculum conditions the texts by allowing different interpretations but mandating a particular sequence of historical significance. It also reveals the way that historiographical

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[210] Bassel Akar, "The Space Between Civic Education and Active Citizenship in Lebanon," in *Rethinking Education for Social Cohesion: International Case Studies* [Kindle edition], ed. Maha Shuayb (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
[211] Jonathan Kriener, *Lebanese—But How? Secular and Religious Conceptions of State and Society at Lebanese Schools*, 114.

debates in the academy are managed and applied in the much more limited world of education. Required to conform to the curriculum and to basic historical and educational norms, the texts reveal their biases not so much in the grand narratives they build but in often subtle variations within a shared central narrative. Finally, this analysis provides invaluable context for the ensuing discussion of reform efforts and the role that Lebanese history is asked to play in Lebanese society.

CHAPTER THREE

REFORM, DEBATE, AND FAILURE

> If history is merely the story told by those who won, how did they win in the first place? And why don't all winners tell the same story?[212]

Given the widespread belief that the panoply of private textbooks strengthens sectarianism, it is no surprise that calls for a unified textbook come from all corners. This call is almost always tied to a demand for revising and updating the curriculum to bring it to the present day. The Lebanese government has intermittently attempted to write a unified history curriculum and textbook series. The process has nearly succeeded twice: Once in 2001 and again in 2012. Analyzing this dysfunctional process and its failure is useful for two reasons. First, it sheds light on the visions of history that animate various political actors and the historical issues over which they disagree. Second, it reveals how those political actors conceptualize history and particularly history education. Focusing on the successes and failures of the process to create a curriculum helps illuminate the problems of social cohesion the curriculum is meant to address: "Examining the process of reaching consensus on the definition or reformulation of sensitive learning content in conflict-affected societies is indeed of great value in understanding how education may contribute to social cohesion."[213]

Sobhi Tawil and Alexandra Harley have argued that curricula can "be seen as *social contracts* resulting from processes of social dialogue, bargaining, negotiating, and reaching consensus."[214] In Lebanon that social contract has not yet been struck in the postwar period, but this study aims to unravel some of the dialogue, bargaining, and negotiating that has taken place

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[212] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 6.
[213] Sobhi Tawil and Alexandra Harley, "Education and Identity-based Conflict: Assessing Curriculum Policy for Social and Civic Reconstruction," 21.
[214] Ibid.

and explain why consensus has not been reached. Looking at press coverage and the statements of public figures, I highlight some specific points of historical disagreement over the Civil War and the Cedar Revolution to help illuminate the state of the public historiographical debate. The two most recent major attempts to reform the history curriculum failed due to politicized opposition to textbook content, once by the Minister of Education and once by Kataeb MP Sami Gemayel. This opposition represented engagement in the process of making history. In airing their criticisms of the proposed curriculum and putting forth their own visions of history, they were not only seeking to change the text itself but were actively involved in shaping the field of Lebanese history.

Nemer Frayha and the 2001 Effort

The first effort to rewrite the Lebanese history curriculum took place amid a broader curricular reform effort, in which all subjects were updated with new material and pedagogical techniques after the civil war. When the new curricula were released in October 1998, the history curriculum was not among them. Members of the panel negotiating the contents of the history curriculum were unable to come to agreement on schedule. This six-member consultative council, organized according to the logic of confessional representation, could not decide on "the core of the book's contents" and estimated another two years before their work would be complete.[215] Press reports indicated that the process was derailed by disagreements about Lebanon's civil war years as well as its place in regional politics. Jean Obeid, Minister of Education, Youth Guidance, and Sports, promised that the completed text would be a broad and inclusive history, "with an approach that includes all regions, religious groups and clans."[216]

[215] "Arguments Could Delay New History Book for 2 Years," *The Daily Star,* October 29, 1998.
[216] "School Book to Give Even Account of Recent Events," *The Daily Star*, October 28, 1998.

In May 2000 the Cabinet approved a history curriculum for all grades up to university level.[217] Announcing the next phase, the writing of the textbooks, Education Minister Youssef Beydoun acknowledged that disagreement among sectarian representatives of the curriculum committee had delayed the process. Nonetheless, he stated that present and past disagreement were not due to internal differences but the machinations of regional and international actors in Lebanese politics: "The history book was transformed into a political vessel and a tool for brainwashing and deepening disunity and difference among the sects."[218]

The responsibility of writing the textbooks belonged to the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD), a semi-autonomous government organization reporting to the Minister of Education. The textbook for each grade from two to twelve was entrusted to a committee including a historian, a schoolteacher, a professor of education, and a textbook writer. As before, the membership of these committees consciously reflected sectarian diversity so as to prevent any group from arguing that they were cut out of the process.[219]

The first two books to be completed, for grades 2 and 3, were printed under the title *Nafidha 'ala al-madhi* in time for use in September 2001 when the school year started. Nemer Freyha, CERD head, submitted these to Minister of Education Abdel Rahim Murad with a note indicating that they were ready to be distributed in schools. According to Frayha, Murad distributed the books to an unofficial group he had assembled to monitor the textbook process. He subsequently called a meeting with Frayha, the CERD's Consulting Committee on the textbooks, and three representatives of the teachers' unions. These union representatives criticized a number of elements in the text, which they considered errors but which Frayha

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[217] "Cabinet Passes History Courses for Schools," *The Daily Star*, May 11, 2000.
[218] "Consensus on Past Means History Books Can Go Ahead," *The Daily Star*, May 20, 2000.
[219] "Once Again, History is Bogged Down in Politics," *The Daily Star,* October 27, 2001.

maintains are “well-documented events.”[220] The elements at issue tended either to represent the West in a positive light or the Ottomans or Arabs in a negative light, though some were as innocuous as the fact that Taha Hussein’s wife was French. The biggest sticking point was over the inclusion of the Arab conquest in a Lebanese historical chain, suggesting that Lebanon was not previously Arab. Frayha considered the criticism of the books as emerging from “an intense ‘Pan-Arab’ and ‘anti-Western’ ideology.”[221] Nonetheless, Jonathan Kriener has found in a series of interviews that a number of important educational administrators were unwilling to accept the book’s depiction of the Arab conquest, including the directors of the Makassed Society, the Mahdi Schools, and the Amal Foundation, along with members of the national Trade Union of Secondary Teachers.[222]

As a result of the controversy the CERD issued a statement announcing the removal of the offending page (88) from the textbook and suspending the teaching of that section until further review. The statement maintained that no offense had been intended, as was clear from the surrounding passages. MP Bassem Yammout argued that the bias against Lebanon’s Arab identity was visible throughout the book. As an example he criticized the book’s description of the martyrs under Jamal Pasha as Lebanese rather than Arab: “It is very well known that at the time there wasn’t anything called the state of Lebanon as we know it now.”[223]

Murad later told the *New York Times* that in addition to “mistakes in the pictures, the content, and the material,” the book failed to respect Lebanon’s Arab identity. Murad was accused of stymying the book at the behest of the Syrians, who at that time dominated Lebanese

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[220] Frayha, “Pressure Groups and Education Policy,” 107.
[221] Ibid.
[222] Jonathan Kriener, *Lebanese—But How? Secular and Religious Conceptions of State and Society at Lebanese Schools*, 77.
[223] “Education Center Removes Page from History Book,” *The Daily Star,* October 24, 2001.

politics.[224] Nemer Frayha claimed in an interview that Ghazi Canaan, the head of Syrian intelligence in Lebanon, was stronger than the president, and that Abdel Rahim Murad was essentially "his office boy." The two would not allow a textbook that put forward a vision of an independent Lebanon.[225] Frayha's position, however, was not historically neutral either. It argued not only for an independent Lebanon (an incontrovertible reality), but also for a "super-historical [Lebanon] that somehow naturally endured, while other rules had to give way to it" (a much more political claim).[226] Frayha refused to back down and was fired, officially for committing errors in the textbook. The minister's interest group then rewrote the books, but due to the highly politicized environment and content these new books were not distributed either.[227]

Unlike the subsequent 2012 effort, this reform effort failed for reasons that were largely private. There was not a great deal of public debate over the content of the new curriculum, although the press did follow the controversy. It does show the extent to which classic historiographical debates have retained some relevance. The question of Lebanon's autonomy and relationship with Syria was central to the end of the unified history project in 2001. The failure of this effort also makes clear how fragile the curriculum development process is. The reform effort got so far that books actually had to be recalled from stores and history temporarily replaced with civic education in classrooms. All it took was a word from Murad, and the effort came to nothing. Instead of changing the offending section(s), the next director of CERD destroyed the books that had been produced.[228]

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[224] Tamara Abdul Hadi, "A Nation with a Long Memory but a Truncated History," *New York Times*, January 9, 2007.
[225] Interview with Nemer Frayha, August 21, 2012, Zouk Mosbeh.
[226] Jonathan Kriener, *Lebanese—But How? Secular and Religious Conceptions of State and Society at Lebanese Schools*, 78.
[227] Frayha, "Pressure Groups and Education Policy," 108.
[228] Interview with Nemer Frayha, August 21, 2012, Zouk Mosbeh.

Sami Gemayel and the 2012 Effort

The next serious attempt came a decade later with a special push from the Minister of Education to create a unified history curriculum. In late 2011 a ministerial committee announced their approval of a draft history curriculum for grades one through nine. The history books would not be written until the curriculum was approved. Minister of State Nicolas Fattoush took the opportunity to say, "we seek to provide a unified curriculum to a unified and undivided Lebanon."[229] The problem, as always, was that there was no unified and undivided Lebanon to give it to. Controversy began in January when Culture Minister Gaby Layyoun, a member of Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement,[230] announced that the curriculum would avoid the phrase "Cedar Revolution" in favor of "wave of demonstrations." Layyoun argued that "Cedar Revolution" was an invention of Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman (in fact it was first used by Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula J. Dobriansky). This position sparked an immediate backlash from figures like PSP leader Walid Jumblatt and Kataeb MP Sami Gemayel.[231] Jumblatt asked, "Is it possible to deny historical facts and bright pages from Lebanese modern history as Culture Minister Gaby Layyoun did by refusing to recognize the Cedar Revolution? … Does disagreement in politics erase historical events?"[232] Minister of State Nicolas Fattoush, the head of the ministerial committee for the new history curriculum, announced in February that the curriculum would ignore "the events of February 2005," that is, the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and the ensuing protests. He explained

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[229] "Ministerial Committee Plans to Approve Draft Unified History Curriculum," *The Daily Star*, December 21, 2011.
[230] "Proposed History Textbook Omits the Cedar Revolution, *Ya Libnan*, February 29, 2012.
[231] Van Meguerditchian, "History Curriculum Revision Sparks Controversy," *The Daily Star*, January 31, 2012.
[232] Ibid.

this as an attempt to separate the curriculum project from political controversy,[233] but he would not be so lucky.

At the end of that month, Sami Gemayel, Kataeb MP and son of former President Amine Gemayel, organized a press conference to air his criticisms of the proposed curriculum. Under the slogan, "If you want to overcome a people, make them forget their history," he provided a laundry list of complaints: (1) description of the Ottoman era as an "age" though some consider it an occupation; (2) absence of the Armenians from history; (3) neglect of the Christian martyrs who protected Lebanon from the Palestinians and the Syrian occupation; (4) description of the bombing of Achrafieh and the siege of Zahleh as simply "events;" (5) absence of October 13, 1990, when the Syrian army took the presidential palace at Baabda and massacred soldiers and civilians; (6) referring to the period from 1990 to 2005 as "the stage of the Ta'if Agreement and the process of construction" rather than a time of confusion and absence of leadership; and (7) no mention of the "glorious revolution of a million and a half Lebanese" against Syrian occupation in 2005.[234]

Gemayel criticized what he characterized as a selective rather than objective history, insisting that selectivity was "a red line."[235] He threatened a boycott of the curriculum in Kataeb-affiliated schools unless these issues were addressed, asking "Should we tell the families of the Lebanese resistance that their loved ones died in a car accident?"[236] In March around 300 student supporters of Kataeb and the National Liberal Party organized a demonstration against the

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[233] "2005 Protests Won't Be in Curriculum," *The Daily Star,* February 7, 2012.
[234] "*Sami al-jumayyil yuhadhdhir min 'isyan tarbawi: la li-l-istinsabiyya fi kitab al-tarikh," Al-Safir,* February 29, 2012.
[235] "Gemayel Admonishes Government to Revise History Curriculum," *The Daily Star*, February 28, 2012.
[236] Van Meguerditchian, "Schools Will Boycott History Syllabus in Current Form: MP," *The Daily Star,* February 29, 2012.

proposed curriculum, marching from Kataeb headquarters toward the Grand Serail. The students bore a letter for PM Mikati outlining their demands, which aligned with Gemayel's. The leader of the National Liberal Party's student group also called for recognition of the glories of Pierre Gemayel and, unsurprisingly, Camille and Dany Chamoun.[237] Security forces stopped them outside the Serail amid clashes resulting in a number of injuries.[238]

The violence prompted condemnation of the government from Kataeb and allied groups. Future MP Nidal Tohme spoke out in support of the students' right to protest and of their campaign against the curriculum.[239] The Youth Organization of the Progressive Socialist Party released a statement affirming its support for the youth of Kataeb and the National Liberal Party. In it they called for a national dialogue among students concerning Lebanon's history and particularly the history book.[240] The Maronite Bishops Council released a statement at this time criticizing the curriculum. They argued that "the history of Lebanon will either be the entire history of Lebanon or a project for a new division of the country."[241] From outside the circle of Kataeb's allies, Michel Aoun responded as well. He called the book "not suitable for schools," given particularly its failure to address the events of October 13, 1990, when the Syrian Army ousted Aoun from the Presidential Palace at Baabda and forced him into exile.[242] The Free

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[237] "*Qam' tadhahura talibiyya li-l-kata'ib wa-l-ahrar bi-l-'asi w suqut akthar min 15 jarihan wa-l-jarima: al-mutalaba bi-kitab tarikh ya'tarif bi-l-jami*," *Kataeb*, March 22, 2012. The Chamoun family is the traditional leadership of the NLP.

[238] Martin Armstrong, "9 Injured in Beirut Rally Clashes Between Kataeb, Authorities," *The Daily Star,* March 10, 2012.

[239] "Tohme Says 'Lebanon's Students' Should Not Be Attacked," *NOW Lebanon*, March 12, 2012.

[240] "'*Asharat al-qatla w-ishtibakat bi-dimashq… wa-Annan "Al-hall fi suria sa'b." Al-Anba'*, March 12, 2012.

[241] "*Al-matarina al-mawarina: Kitab al-tarikh imma li-kul lubnan wa-imma mashru' inqisam jadid*," *Al-joumhouria*, March 7, 2012.

[242] "Aoun: No Settlement Has Been Reached Yet over Administrative Appointments," *Naharnet*, February 28, 2012.

Patriotic Movement released a statement saying, “As General Michel Aoun has promised: a history book like this cannot be acknowledged, especially given that it ignores what the army and the people offered in terms of sacrifices to safeguard stability and regain sovereignty.”[243]

In the wake of these clashes and the resulting firestorm, Prime Minister Mikati released a statement shelving ministerial discussion of the proposed new curriculum, effectively ending the project. According to Gemayel, “We think the matter has arrived at its end until a new mechanism is proposed that takes into account Lebanese consensus and the sacrifices by all the Lebanese, without exception.”[244] Gemayel was content to leave it at that. Instead of pressing the issue of amending the book, he praised Mikati for shelving the issue, saying that this is what Kataeb had wanted.[245]

Understanding the curricular demands of Hizbullah, representing the opposition, provides some useful context for these demands. Although we do not know the inner workings of the original committee, we know at least some of the demands put forward by Hizbullah’s voice on the supervisory Ministerial Committee, Minister for Administrative Reform Muhammad Fneish. Fneish requested the inclusion of multiple references to Imam Sayyid Abdul-Hussein Charafeddine, a mid-century Shiite religious leader from Tyre, and discussion of the ‘Amili Trio (Sheikh Ahmad Rida, Muhammad Jaber Al Safa, and Sheikh Suleiman Daher), three prominent Shiite Arabists. He also called for more coverage of the cities of the South and the Beqaa, especially their economic and social integration with Palestine and Syria. He wanted reference to the Hula Massacre and the birth of the Resistance, suggesting a separate, larger chapter devoted

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[243] “Mikati to Meet Kataeb Students, FPM Decries Saturday Clashes,” *The Daily Star,* March 11, 2012.
[244] Martin Armstrong, “Gemayel: Mikati Halted Debate on History Texts Until Consensus Reached,” *The Daily Star*, March 14, 2012.
[245] “*Miqati qarrara ba‘da laqa’ahu Sami al-Jumayyil ikhraj mawdhu‘ kitab al-tarikh bi-sighatihi al-haliyya min al-tadawul li-dars alia jadida taraddi jami‘ al-afriqa’*,” *Kataeb*, March 22, 2012.

entirely to the Resistance. He called for replacing the phrase “the State of Israel” with “the Israeli Occupation” and spending more time on the Palestinian issue. And finally, he objected to the characterization of the post-Ta’if period and suggested removing the Cedar Revolution from the curriculum.[246] Though the differences between these two programs were stark, the *types* of complaints were similar. Like Gemayel, Fneish called for special attention to his own religious community as well as the regions to which it was connected, recognition of martyrdom and sacrifice, attention to a specific overlooked group, and attention to the way the curriculum dealt with the recent political upheaval represented by the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and the expulsion of the Syrians from Lebanon.

The State of the Debate

Gemayel’s demands encompassed a wide variety of concerns, which fit only partially into the classic paradigm of Lebanese history that Kataeb would have supported in the early days of the republic. Although Kataeb’s power has dwindled significantly in recent years, it is a major representative of the Lebanese Maronite political establishment. In the war they fought for the Christian identity of Lebanon against what they viewed as encroachment by Palestinians and their predominantly Muslim allies. As such they represent a military and political manifestation of what we have called the Lebanist or Lebanese nationalist trend. Gemayel’s insistence that the Ottoman period constituted an occupation fit into this classic paradigm, which viewed Lebanon as an essentially Christian entity under long-term Muslim occupation. His desire to include the Armenians was consistent with a particularly Christian vision of Lebanon and Michel Chiha’s vision of a pluralist republic. Three of his demands referred to events in the civil war with particular resonance for Christians: the bombing of Achrafieh and the siege of Zahleh, the Syrian

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[246] “*Al-lajna al-wizariyya tanhi dirasat minhaj kitab tarikh ba‘da jumlat mulahadhat*,” *Al-Ahed*, January 5, 2012.

takeover of the Presidential Palace at the end of the war, and Christian defense of Lebanon against Syrians and Palestinians. The last two referred to postwar developments: the post-Ta'if period and the Independence Intifada. In other words, Gemayel's historiographical intervention ran the gamut, from the Ottoman period all the way to the last few years. However, there was nothing about the Phoenicians, about the historicity of Lebanon, about the French and the mandate, or any number of other issues over which prior generations of sectarian politics sparred. Without access to the curriculum itself, it is difficult to judge how it may have fit into the classic paradigms. Nonetheless, the fact that Gemayel largely ignored these issues is significant. It is likely that the curriculum's representation of the earlier period did not provoke Gemayel to object because it was largely unobjectionable. The same could be said of Fneish, whose only demand that seemed to echo the traditional historiographical debates was his eagerness to link Lebanon historically to Palestine and Syria in the economic and social realms. Although their demands were very different, Gemayel and Fneish both seemed relatively comfortable with the new curriculum's treatment of the pre-independence period.

The debates surrounding the development of the new curriculum saw the continuing influence of sectarian narratives, with a representative of the Maronites and of the Shia each advocating for the recognition of the special place of his community in national history. Each also argued against the perceived erasure of their own communities and their allies. The power of local and regional loyalties, often strongly connected to sect, was also clear in Gemayel's focus on Achrafiyeh, Zahleh, and Baabda, and Fneish's focus on the South and the Beqaa. Fneish's concern with Palestine, Syria, and Israel, considered against Gemayel's demands, highlighted the continuing centrality of the question of Lebanon's relations with its neighbors. Sacrifice and martyrdom were central to each of these critiques, and of course these concepts were linked to

the experience of specific sectarian communities and political movements. But we also saw historiographical debates unfolding along the lines of contemporary political factions, across the boundaries of both religion and civil war partisanship. Thus the PSP supported Kataeb calls to celebrate Christian “resistance” to the Palestinians. The concept of resistance also highlighted the salience of today’s politics. The idiom through which Gemayel chose to convey the Christian contribution, which he saw as unrecognized in the new book, was the unassailable notion of resistance. This choice included a critique of the delimitation of resistance to mean only Hizbullah’s defense against Israel. A central axis of the historiographical debate is still the relationship between Lebanon and Syria, but the context has changed. It has now crystallized into the question of Syria’s political and military role in Lebanon, and unsurprisingly, the Future movement and the PSP were happy to back up a vision of history denigrating Syria. More interesting was the alacrity with which they supported their Kataeb allies in a vision of history working against the traditional Sunni Arabist paradigm, or in the case of the PSP, one that so obviously vilified the Lebanese National Movement under which the PSP fought during the war. The Hizbullah narrative may have echoes of the classic Arabist paradigm, but it was primarily (though not exclusively) Sunnis leading the Arabist camp in the prewar period, with Shiite voices marginalized.

This shifting of loyalties shows us the tendency to project the present onto the past. Groups today are not locked into the narrative of history they may have espoused in the middle of the twentieth century. A group’s favored history owes a great deal to its current political position and alliances. Ironically, there is a positive aspect to this. Lebanese parties project the present on the past in a way that can unify as well as divide. Current political configurations condition what histories the parties allow to be told, for instance, with Sunni, Druze, and

Maronite conflict backgrounded in light of the Future-Kataeb-PSP relationship. We have also seen some of the ambiguities that arise from this, however, with Gaby Layyoun speaking out against the very Independence Intifada in which he and his party played a prominent role, but we have also seen Aoun coming together with Gemayel to demand inclusion of the "black day" of October 13, 1990. Obviously the FPM is being pulled in a number of directions in terms of its vision of modern Lebanese history. Columnist Michael Young pointed out that it was Gaby Layyoun, FPM representative and Aoun's nephew, who struck the Cedar Revolution from the curriculum, while Aoun himself lamented the exclusion of Syria's assault on October 13, 1990 from the curriculum. What Young mocked as Aoun's "contradictions"[247] highlight the conflicting pulls of historical memory for political groups in Lebanon. The FPM's historical vision is constrained in different ways by the personal experience of its leader, a sectarian logic, and its current alliance with Hizbullah.

The Causes of Failure

It is tempting to say that the failure to produce a unified history curriculum was inevitable because of all the factors aligned against it. Nonetheless it is important to remember how close the reform attempts have come. The 2001 attempt saw a set of textbooks for one grade distributed before a recall and a temporary hiatus on history teaching when the project was cancelled.[248] Although many authors take a pessimistic view, it is overly fatalistic to say that a unified curriculum is impossible. A particular combination of factors prevented success, but this combination was contingent. It could well align differently in the future, though not without structural reform and, as I will suggest in the next chapter, a more coherent discourse.

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[247] Young, Michael. "Aoun-Goals, Day After Day," *NOW Lebanon,* March 2, 2012.
[248] Interview with Nemer Frayha, August 21, 2012, Zouk Mosbeh.

The process of reform has to go through the Lebanese bureaucracy, which presents a number of challenges. As seen in the 2001 attempt, the machinery of the state can operate very slowly, and the lengthy process extends the vulnerability of these efforts to sabotage. The bureaucracy is also susceptible to turf battles. In an interview Nemer Frayha related the story that his successor as head of the CERD had a series of textbooks (in a subject other than history) that was printed under Frayha recalled. She destroyed these copies and then had a new series printed that was exactly the same except with her name instead of his.[249]

The particular politicized character of the Lebanese bureaucracy provides an even greater difficulty. The logic of sectarianism requires any history education reform effort to include representatives of the major sects and the major parties. Not only does such a cacophony of voices render decision making difficult, but this approach politicizes the process from the very beginning. The reform effort is held hostage to the demands of every faction and every sect in order for it to make it through. In effect, every actor has veto power. If it is not possible to exercise it behind closed doors, it is always possible to raise a public uproar and mobilize supporters. This is what Sami Gemayel did in 2012. Before the public even got a chance to see the new curriculum, Sami Gemayel had a leaked copy in hand and unveiled a tightly coordinated public relations campaign against it. Related to this is the issue of credit and turf battles mentioned above. The successful release of a unified history curriculum would be seen as a significant achievement for the sitting cabinet, which makes the opposition stand to gain from stymieing it (even, or perhaps especially, if the majority of efforts were actually carried out under their own watch). This type of sandbagging and undercutting happens not just in education but in all issues in Lebanon, creating the stasis that helps explain why the state is so woefully

[249] Interview with Nemer Frayha, August 21, 2012, Zouk Mosbeh.

incompetent in providing services to its citizens. An important factor in successful reform of education for reconciliation is the commitment of political elites to the reconciliation process. Reconciliation must be a "source of legitimacy" and "political capital" or the process can be hamstrung by withdrawal of elites.[250] In Lebanon reconciliation rarely provides capital unless masking a political move, such as Walid Jumblatt's many changes of heart regarding Syria.

Another factor combating successful reform is the lack of time elapsed between the events in question and the reform efforts. This attitude can be seen, for example, in an exchange in March 2012 between Issam Khalifeh and Sami Gemayel. Khalifeh argued, "As an academic, I think it's too early to get into the details of post-1975 history of Lebanon, because the war wounds are still fresh."[251] Many members of the current political leadership were active in the war period, leaving them with a personal stake in how the era is represented. The Cedar Revolution is an even more glaring example. When Fattoush announced that it would not be included in the curriculum, he stressed the need to "allow historians more time to study the period in an objective and scientific manner."[252] Patrick Richar, president of the Kataeb's student branch, suggested that a book might take another decade saying, "It is a shame but under the [present] circumstances we are unable to gather all Lebanese around one book and [taking the proposed textbook off the agenda] is practical."[253] Hasan Diab suggested waiting four years

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[250] Wolfgang Höpken, "History-Textbooks and Reconciliation: Preconditions and Experiences in a Comparative Perspective," Paper submitted at a World Bank meeting in Washington, DC, November 11, [no year], 5, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTCEERD/Resources/EDUCwolfganghopken.pdf.

[251] Van Meguerditchian, "New History Curriculum Topic of Hot Debate," *The Daily Star*, March 17, 2012.

[252] "2005 Protests Won't Be in Curriculum," *The Daily Star*, February 7, 2012.

[253] Martin Armstrong, "Gemayel: Mikati Halted Debate on History Texts Until Consensus Reached," *The Daily Star*, March 14, 2012.

before writing about the period between 2005 and 2010 in order to ensure objectivity.[254] While to an extent this represents foot dragging and attempts to skirt controversial topics or avoid unfavorable outcomes, there is a certain logic to it. The distance of time does not erase all differences, but it does often allow a more cool-headed approach. The relative convergence of narratives in the textbooks surveyed in the previous chapter owes something to the time elapsed between the creation of Greater Lebanon and the present day.

More important than the passage of time *per se* is the nature of political life between the event and its writing into history. The conflict in Lebanon is particularly ill-suited to positive outcomes in history education reform, according to Wolfgang Höpken's analysis of history textbooks and reconciliation. The lack of clear winners and losers complicates the process: "Where the outcome of a conflict and the question of responsibility is less clear, where the end of a conflict comes as a result of a bargain or a military deadlock, a concise policy of reconciliation often is more difficult to implement, in and outside education."[255] It is difficult to achieve a hegemonic discourse in a country whose conflicts are run through the historical filter of "*la ghalib wa-la maghlub*," or "no victor and no vanquished."[256] Wolfgang Höpken also argues that the continued occurrence of violence, even at a low level, can subvert the reconciliation process.[257] The very possibility of crafting useful educational tools is curtailed if groups continue to disagree about "basic political questions," as parties to the conflict will seek to use education

[254] Wassim Mroueh, "Diab: Issues with History Syllabus Purely Political," *The Daily Star,* April 25, 2012.
[255] Wolfgang Höpken, "History-Textbooks and Reconciliation: Preconditions and Experiences in a Comparative Perspective," 4.
[256] Craig Larkin, "Beyond the War? Lebanese Postmemory Experience," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42 no. 4 (November 2010).
[257] Wolfgang Höpken, "History-Textbooks and Reconciliation: Preconditions and Experiences in a Comparative Perspective," 4.

to advance their own positions.[258] Many authors argue that history education is available and useful as a tool of reconciliation only when a first stage of reconciliation in the public sphere has been reached. According to Elizabeth A. Cole, in this process "changes in history textbooks and curricula would function as a kind of secondary phase, which reflect and embody the state's commitment to institutionalizing earlier processes such as truth and historical commissions and official gestures and processes of acknowledgement, apology, and repair."[259] This stage was never reached in Lebanon, where history has been avoided not only in schools but in all areas where social harmony is valued, though it pervades public discourse. This is not to say that history education could not have a role in furthering reconciliation, but rather that reconciliation and history teaching have a more complicated relationship. Cole calls this a "chicken-and-egg problem: history education potentially can promote reconciliation, but a certain stage of reconciliation needs to be reached before textbooks can be revised."[260]

[258] Wolfgang Höpken, "History-Textbooks and Reconciliation: Preconditions and Experiences in a Comparative Perspective," 4.
[259] Elizabeth A. Cole, "Introduction: Reconciliation and History Education," 15.
[260] Ibid., 18.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEBATE AND THE PRODUCTION OF HISTORY

> Even history which claims to be universal is still only a juxtaposition of a few local histories within which (and between which) very much more is left out than is put in.[261]

The debates over the proposed new history curricula were about more than different historical narratives; they were also about different conceptions of history. Specifically, they were about the nature of history and its purpose in the field of education. The public debates surrounding reform suggested a wide variety of conceptions of history education and the proper role of history. Policymakers expected it to be doing different (often multiple) kinds of work, many of them incompatible. One of the central problems holding back reform of history education is a profound ambiguity over what it should be doing in society.

I am not concerned with the production of academic history, but the production of history in the field of public political discourse regarding education. This focus reflects David William Cohen's reminder to historians "that the control of voices on the past has been critical and remains critical in all sorts of settings," not just in the academy.[262] Cohen defined the production of history as the "the processing of the past in societies and historical settings all over the world and the struggles for control of voices and texts in innumerable settings which animate this processing of the past."[263]

In the course of the education debate participants have at various times (and using various terms) called for an objective history, a nationalist history, a commemorative history, and a

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[261] Claude Lévi-Strauss, "History and Dialectic," in *The Savage Mind,* trans. George Wiedenfeld and Nicholson Ltd. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/levi-strauss.htm.
[262] David William Cohen, *The Combing of History*, 4.
[263] Ibid., 244.

pluralist history. Sometimes the calls are made explicitly, by politicians aware that they are arguing for a specific understanding of history, while other times these functions are simply implicit in the way they represent their cause. Very few of these discussions are intellectually coherent, as politicians arguing for a given understanding of history often present views inimical to that understanding (for instance, demanding an objective, scientific history that celebrates the glorious achievements of the Lebanese people through the centuries). Worst of all, many of these politicians seem unaware of the nature of these disagreements beyond maintaining that they believe in the "right" kind of history and their opponents believe in the "wrong" kind. This dissonance complicates the existing and more coherent debates about the content of history, overburdening history beyond its capacity to perform the functions required of it even if there were agreement as to its content. In the end this seriously damages the prospects for successful unification of the history curriculum.

Objective History

Politicians in Lebanon overwhelmingly tout the need for "objective" or "scientific" history, often with the additional attribute of "completeness." In fact if there is one point of agreement on how Lebanon's history should be taught, it is that it should be "objective." A *Daily Star* editorial laid out this impression in plain terms, arguing that history "is not a point of view. It is a learned, objective thing, in which there are facts and truths."[264] This impression is echoed by figures across the spectrum. The idea of completeness is an important part of the argument for objectivity, expressed either as the notion that an objective history must contain *all* events, or it must contain some *particular* event to be complete. For example, in reference to the absence of the Armenians from the proposed curriculum, Tashnag MP Hagop Pakradounian told

[264] "Confront the Past," *The Daily Star*, March 17, 2012.

the *Daily Star*, "We refuse to accept any book that removes historical events or fails to mention the history of any of the Lebanese sects."[265] Asked about the textbook issue, Michel Aoun said, "No one can remove anything from history and events."[266] Amid the backlash over Layyoun's removal of the "Cedar Revolution," Van Meguerditchian of the Daily Star wrote, "several historians said Tuesday that if a unified Lebanese history textbook is to be written, it should be written in full because history requires all that has ever happened to be recorded."[267] The call for an objective history is both a rejoinder to particular sectarian narratives and a compromise solution hoping to avoid controversy by retreating into incontrovertible truth. This conception of history is supposed to leave out interpretation and analysis, simply gathering "the so-called forensic truths, the 'who did what to whom' facts" and putting them together for the student to internalize.[268]

The notion of historical objectivity is one of perennial concern for historians. In *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession,* Peter Novick argued that objectivity was based on "a commitment to the reality of the past, and to truth as correspondence to that reality; a sharp separation between knower and known, between fact and value, and above all, between history and fiction."[269] Objectivity was a bedrock of modern historical writing, a measure of its value as a professional activity. The quality of a written history was to be judged by how closely it aligned with the reality of the past. Facts were

[265] Van Meguerditchian, "Schools Will Boycott History Syllabus in Current Form: MP," *The Daily Star,* February 29, 2012.
[266] "*Aoun: Kitab al-tarikh laysa salih li-l-qira'a," Lebanon Files*, February 28, 2012.
[267] Van Meguerditchian, "History Curriculum Revision Sparks Controversy," *The Daily Star*, January 31, 2012.
[268] Elizabeth A. Cole and Judy Barsalou, "Unite or Divide? The Challenges of Teaching History in Societies Emerging from Violent Conflict," 9.
[269] Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1-2.

discovered, and patterns “found” within them rather than created. The historian was “a neutral, or disinterested, judge.”[270]

This simplistic picture has been challenged on a number of fronts. Historians diverged so widely in their understanding of the nature of truth that Novick claimed in 1988 that “as a community of scholars united by common aims, common standards, and common purposes, the discipline of history had ceased to exist.”[271] A less alarmist reading would suggest simply that there is no accepted standard for truth in history. Michel-Rolph Trouillot argued that the positivist view, believing “the role of the historian is to reveal the past, to discover or, at least, approximate the truth,” retains enough force that its basic assumptions are still often taken for granted by historians who do not consider themselves positivists.[272] On the other end of the spectrum is the constructivist view, which maintains that history is constructed, “one among many types of narratives with no particular distinction except for its pretense of truth.”[273] One standard-bearer of this relativist view is Hayden White, who viewed all history writing as literary production and rejected the line between history and fiction. While this extreme position did not cause masses of historians to despair of making history and resign their positions, it did provide an influential critique of objectivity and focus more attention on the position of historian as composer rather than chronicler of history.[274]

Some historians stake out a specific ground along this spectrum, while others are content simply to keep writing history without becoming lost in the theory, aiming as close to the

[270] Ibid., 2.
[271] Ibid., 628.
[272] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 5.
[273] Ibid., 6.
[274] Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession*, 605.

historical truth as possible without fretting over the nature of that truth.[275] This is largely the case with unprofessional historians, exactly the type of people engaged in the production of history in the debate over curricular reform. But this lack of engagement with the idea of objectivity, coupled with its power in legitimizing discourses, complicates the process. The notion of total completeness is absurd, but it is intimately connected to the way objectivity is understood in this debate. This conflation masks the reality that silences are a constitutive element of history. What is not mentioned in history is in a sense just as important as what is mentioned, and "mentions and silences are thus active, dialectical counterparts of which history is the synthesis."[276] The production of history is a process of selective appropriation of the past in which certain events are imbued with significance and recorded, while others are not.[277] Any history engages in silencing, and when sectarian leaders object to the absence of some event from history, they are resisting a particular pattern of silencing. Objectivity is not the right way to get at that. A historical narrative ignoring some particular historically significant moment is not necessarily *not objective* for that reason, nor does inserting that moment into the narrative make it *objective*. In the debate over reform, objectivity came to be represented as an aggregation of each sect's tendentious history into one chronicle. But this is not the type of objective history that brings out "so-called forensic truths" and leaves judgment up to the reader. It is a conglomeration of particular histories working at odds against each other by trying to celebrate each sect's victories over the others and its suffering at the hands of the others.

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[275] Francois Furet, *In the Workshop of History,* trans. Jonathan Mandelbaum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 19.
[276] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 48.
[277] Stuart Foster and Keith Crawford, "Introduction: The Critical Importance of History Textbook Research," in *What Shall We Tell the Children? International Perspectives on School History Textbooks*, 6.

An attempt to create an objective Lebanese history for use in schools would likely be doomed to failure. Lebanon is certainly a case where "there are some recent pasts so politically and morally charged as to preempt any neutral accounting, when even the attempt to stand aside is to take a stand."[278] We saw in the last chapter that politicians were dedicated to the inclusion of an ever-expanding list of events not because they satisfied some objective criteria of historical significance, but because they resonated with a particular community's sense of self. A chronology would be empty of so many of the things necessary for history to do the work expected of it: "A rational emphasis on collecting facts might provide a reliable framework for building chronologies, but it would probably neglect, sometimes with violent consequences, the intimate meaning of history for those who survive it."[279]

Pluralist History

This vision of history may be the most common and yet the hardest to label. I use "pluralist history" to refer to a vision of history for social cohesion, designed to celebrate pluralism and bring the sectarian communities together. In the post-conflict context, "highlighting commonality and shared experiences and objectives" establishes "the common ground necessary for constructive and supportive bonds to develop within and between civil society and the state."[280] This is represented in Lebanon by the idea that the "essence of renewal in writing Lebanon's history has to be in producing a book that encompasses all its

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[278] Alan B. Spitzer, *Historical Truth and Lies About the Past: Reflections on Dewey, Dreyfus, de Man, and Reagan* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 35.
[279] Adam Budd, "History from Within: Trauma and Memory," in *The Modern Historiography Reader: Western Sources*, ed. Adam Budd (London: Routledge, 2009), 312.
[280] Kenneth D. Bush and Diana Saltarelli, eds. *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: Towards a Peacebuilding Education for Children* (Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2000): 19.

communities," the best cure to sectarianism being closer bonds among the sects.[281] In this way pluralism is also related to the idea of completeness discussed above. Every sect's story must be told for the history to be appropriate. The pluralist approach embraces the reality of sectarianism in order to combat its pernicious effects. Sectarian identity need not be ignored, but should be acknowledged and celebrated rather than used to build barriers among the sects.

Nationalist History

Nationalist history represents an alternative to pluralist history, stressing a shared identity and citizenship focused on the state rather than pluralism. The call for nationalist history reflects "the need for a usable past…in a community involved in nation building after widespread violence."[282] Proponents of nationalist history may not conceptualize it as such, but they call for a history that will unite the Lebanese in pride and belonging. Activist Antoine Messarra called for a history that "strives to build a collective, national memory."[283] The power of a Lebanese nationalist history will drown out the nationalist histories of Lebanon's constituent sects, ideally bringing people together far better than the pluralist model of celebrating those differences.

The history curriculum is a classic instrument for the spread of nationalist ideology, "the vehicle through which nations seek to store, transmit and disseminate narratives that define conceptions of nationhood and national culture."[284] Chapters one and two have already demonstrated the centrality of education to the debates over a Lebanese nationalist history. Nemer Frayha provides a standard example of the role imagined for education in forming a

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[281] "Arguments Could Delay New History Book for 2 Years," *The Daily Star,* October 29, 1998.
[282] Cole, Elizabeth A. "Introduction: Reconciliation and History Education," in *Teaching the Violent Past: History Education and Reconciliation*, by Elizabeth A. Cole (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 19.
[283] "Arguments Could Delay New History Book for 2 Years." *The Daily Star*, October 29, 1998.
[284] Stuart Foster and Keith Crawford, "Introduction: The Critical Importance of History Textbook Research," 5.

nationalist history: "In Lebanon, a fragile country struggling to create its national identity, teaching conflicting versions of identity in history can present a threat to peace and coexistence. Hence, developing a national history textbook which emphasizes a unified and shared identity is crucial."[285] In fact, throughout its history, the Lebanese government has openly sought to use education to build up Lebanese nationalism.[286] The new civic education curriculum demonstrates this ideal, even if its historical content is limited. The lack of a hegemonic nationalist narrative stems from the weakness of the state. On some level all Lebanese histories must be nationalist histories (except perhaps a truly objective history that set out simply to list events within Lebanon's borders), but some more than others stress the need to form one narrative, rather than combining many, in order to create a centralized history with a centralizing pull of loyalty.

Commemorative History

In a country like Lebanon with a troubled past, some argue for a history that commemorates and memorializes those who have suffered in its past. The central lesson of this type of history is empathy with others and a commitment to honor the sacrifices of the victims of past violence. Elizabeth A. Cole suggested that "secondary-school history curriculum, teaching, and textbook reform may also function as a part of commemoration, as a form of recognition of victims' suffering."[287] This is the type of history Sami Gemayel was advocating with his insistence on recognizing the sacrifices of the Christian resistance and the suffering of Christians in Achrafieh and Zahleh. In a panel discussion with Professor Issam Khalife, Sami Gemayel

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[285] Nemer Frayha, "Education as a Means of Building Social Cohesion in Lebanon: An Unfinished Task," in *Rethinking Education for Social Cohesion: International Case Studies* [Kindle edition], ed. Maha Shuayb (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
[286] Jonathan Kriener, *Lebanese—But How? Secular and Religious Conceptions of State and Society at Lebanese Schools,* 81.
[287] Elizabeth A. Cole, "Introduction: Reconciliation and History Education," 16.

said, “I still don’t have my doctorate ... [but] the only way to build a real nation is through recognizing others’ sacrifices and identities.”[288]

It is certainly true that nationalist histories mobilize the trope of sacrifice, often to great effect, but those sacrifices are carefully selected at the expense of other silenced sacrifices. The problem with commemorative history is the need for preexisting lines of “us” and “them” for the commemoration to carry emotional weight. As Michael Ignatieff noted in the Balkan case, “shared suffering” does not suggest “shared truth,” because the meaning of suffering depends on the position of the ones remembering. Commemoration of victims necessitates an accounting of perpetrators along with the victims, and that is where agreement must break down among the sects: “Myths of innocence and victimhood are a powerful obstacle in the way of confronting responsibility, as are atrocity myths about the other side.”[289] Could the victims of Achrafieh and Zahleh be honored without mentioning where the bombs came from? Could Sami Gemayel honor the sacrifices of the victims of Sabra and Shatila, of Tel al-Zaatar? Commemoration of Christian martyrs who died in defense of Lebanon from Palestinian encroachment, in Gemayel’s narrative, surely cannot coexist with commemoration of Palestinian martyrs who died at the hands of Christian militias, at least not before a significant political reckoning.

Making Sense of History

The difficulty of achieving all these ends with the same history should be apparent. Some of these visions can be complementary (e.g., commemorative and nationalist history), and some are naturally at odds (e.g., objective history versus nationalist history). All in all they are capable of working in cooperation or conflict depending on how they are used. Prime Minister Najib

[288] Van Meguerditchian, “New History Curriculum Topic of Hot Debate,” *The Daily Star*, March 17, 2012.

[289] Michael Ignatieff, “The Nightmare From Which We Are Trying to Awake,” in *The Modern Historiography Reader: Western Sources*, ed. Adam Budd (London: Routledge, 2009), 323.

Mikati's remarks on the 2012 controversy highlight the way that the history curriculum in Lebanon is supposed to achieve all these goals at once: "we should be faithful to our glorious history, and honest with the facts that no one can ignore, and history book [sic] should be developed away from personal desires and considerations and instead should reflect a common national view that protects our national unity and stresses the importance of Lebanese solidarity."[290] The academic literature is not immune to this conflation of different conceptions of history. Take for example an essay called "On the Impossibility of Teaching History in Lebanon," by Massoud Daher, a history professor at the Lebanese University. He argued that in writing a standardized textbook "the academic study of history must be objective in its methodology and in the academic tools it uses to research historical facts, and it must avoid projecting the past onto the present or the present on to the past."[291] He used phrases like "uncover historical facts" and "objective historian," then suggested that textbooks should take up "the inculcation of pride in national identity and the strengthening of a sense of allegiance to Lebanon…the unity of the Lebanese and the commonality of life between sects."[292] He goes even further, calling for history to foster "Arab solidarity" and expose the "expansionist ambitions" and "abhorrent massacres" by the Zionists.[293]

Two other understandings of history are useful despite not being prominent in the public debates: critical thinking history, and manipulative history. History for critical thinking, or history as a set of tools allowing students to critically engage narratives of the past encountered

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[290] "Mikati: History Curriculum No Place for Narrow Interests," *The Daily Star,* February 28, 2012.
[291] Daher, "On the Impossibility of Teaching History," in *The Politics of Education Reform in the Middle East: Self and Other in Textbooks and Curricula*, ed. Samira Alayan, Achim Rohde, and Sarhan Dhouib (New York: Bergahn Books, 2012): 106.
[292] Ibid., 107.
[293] Ibid., 107-108.

elsewhere, has some relation to the idea of objective history in that it does not presuppose a particular narrative. But instead of the focus on establishing irrefutable facts, history for critical thinking aims to equip students to make the judgments for themselves. Beyond simply having access to facts, students "must be able to read them critically," which "requires the cultivation of skills that will enable them to analyze and assess those facts and events."[294] The historiographical task at hand is not simply putting down all the facts as collected from as many sources as desire to speak. A "critical historiography" allows for the multiplicity of facts but recognizes that "not all histories are equally valid or legitimate."[295] This conception of history is sometimes addressed in the academic literature but only rarely among political leaders, in Lebanon as elsewhere. The importance of skills is widely accepted by experts, but at the level of state policy across the globe the purpose of history education is still understood primarily as the transmission of historical truth or knowledge.

Although political power is wrapped into all claims for the appropriate history, history is also to be understood specifically as a tool for manipulation. Public figures often subscribe to this conception of history as desirable even while publicly denying that this is the case. Histories of intergroup unity are rarely as useful politically as histories of intergroup conflict for the leaders of those groups: "In the hands of capable ethnic manipulators, past events (factual and fictional) are used to illustrate historical wrongs, humiliation and exploitation [to mobilize] support for their respective political projects." [296] The past justifies the present, and wrongs done in the past justify actions against the wrongdoers. But the present also justifies the past: The history that leaders mobilize to justify their politics is itself constructed as a reflection of those

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[294] Kenneth D. Bush and Diana Saltarelli, eds. "The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: Towards a Peacebuilding Education for Children," 19-20.
[295] Ibid., 12.
[296] Ibid., 13.

politics. Gemayel's critique is an example of this kind of conception of history. He argued the making of a nation cannot proceed without a unified history, but he consciously set out to scupper the unified curriculum by demanding the inclusion of sectarian concerns he knew would not be addressed. He set out to destroy the history, not to amend it, allowing his community to continue peddling its own narrative. What policymakers try to represent as a conflict between remembering and forgetting, or telling and ignoring, is actually a conflict between two visions, "an opposition of 'memory against memory.'"[297]

The history education reform controversies shows us not only how politicians' narratives of history differ, but how their understandings of the function of history differ. Academics and politicians (at least in public) agree that a unified history curriculum and textbook are urgently needed, but the precise reason is not clearly articulated. The curriculum is asked to inculcate a strong national Lebanese identity, teach cooperation and coexistence among the sects, be an objective repository of scientifically verifiable facts, and commemorate and memorialize the suffering of particular groups. All the while, the very politicians who superficially embrace one or more of these positive conceptions of history are largely culpable in protecting and pursuing tendentious histories under the guise of objectivity or commemoration. Reaching consensus on any unified history in Lebanon would be a difficult task. Asking it to fulfill all of the different functions expected of it by policymakers makes it all but impossible. Above all, allowing politicians to entrench their existing selective histories within a curriculum that is supposed to perform any of these positive functions for reconciliation dooms the project to failure.

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[297] Elizabeth Jelin, "State Repression and the Struggles for Memory," *openDemocracy*, September 10, 2006, http://www.opendemocracy.net/node/3891/pdf.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

> What if we were going about it the wrong way, and the problem resided not in recourse to memory and to the past but in the specific role that we want to make them play and in the conclusions that we draw from them?[298]

I have examined the nonacademic production of history in the context of text production, where ideas are formalized as curricula and textbooks, and in the context of influence, where interest groups contest and influence educational policy. Together, these observations suggest how professional understandings of history are incorporated into the text in the classroom. In the first case, the content analysis of existing textbooks reveals a diversity of perspectives anchored in a basic narrative established by the official curriculum. While the lack of a unified textbook does allow for a greater variety of approaches to the material, this variety is constrained by the demands of the official examinations and the limited amount of class time devoted to history. Two of the books were identifiably Lebanist and relatively sympathetic to a Christian history of Lebanon, while two reflected an Arabist perspective to varying degrees. Although differences were revealing and often touched on issues still salient today, overall each text remained within a relatively narrow band of historical difference. For instance, the representation of the mandate differed in that the Lebanist texts acknowledged the benefits of French rule, and the more Arabist texts refused to do so. This understanding of French influence has both continuing political salience (Lebanon's relationship with France and the West more broadly) and continuing cultural salience (the cultural-linguistic divide between those who speak French at home and those who speak Arabic). Nonetheless, the divergence in the four representations is not so stark as to

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[298] Tzvetan Todorov, *Memory as a Remedy for Evil*, trans. Gila Walker (London: Seagull Books, 2010), 8.

jeopardize common political and social life in Lebanon. In this case one problem may be taking care of another: the outdated curriculum (which avoids the most contentious issues of today) limits the potential damage of the multiplicity of narratives represented by privately published textbooks.

In the second case, the attempts to reform the history curriculum, while unsuccessful in changing the content of history instruction in the classroom, nonetheless generated historical debate and dialogue. The way Sami Gemayel voiced his demands reveals the extent to which his critique was a performance. He was well aware that this political theater would provide him a platform to put forth his vision of history in the public sphere to be heard, read, and debated by those to whom it mattered. Many factors came together to end the reform projects, including bureaucracy, political prerogatives, and the absence of a larger reconciliation project. Perhaps most importantly, reform was stymied by a confusion surrounding the appropriate role of history education. Ambiguity surrounding different conceptions of the role and value of history has complicated reform efforts by stretching the functions of history education beyond the breaking point. While the reform project was all about replacing disparate narratives with a unified history, the public debates surrounding it were all about replacing a unified history with disparate narratives. The process provided a platform for public figures to disseminate and entrench, beyond their existing sphere of influence, the very sectarian narratives reform was meant to combat.

The failure of the reform process creates the illusion of stasis, but in fact the historical field is dynamic. The historiographical concerns of Sami Gemayel in 2012 had almost nothing to do with the tensions and debates visible in the existing privately published history textbooks. Nor are those textbooks likely to be very similar to what would have been produced in the prewar

period. The process of public policymaking and textbook writing both constitute acts of history making, and the situation of the current curriculum allows a multitude of voices in this process, amplified through the media.

The common wisdom among academics is that one unified history curriculum and textbook series would be superior to the current assortment of textbooks. As Nemer Frayha said, "one chain of these textbooks, even if it has many shortcomings, would be better than having 20 chains of textbooks… When we study a common history, at least we have a common view of our past. At least we understand through a common background our present. And we might also look as a common group to our future."[299] Although such a history would probably be better than the status quo, it remains to be seen just how much better. The preceding observations provide only uncertainty regarding the prospects for the role of history education for reconciliation in Lebanon. The sheer weight of the obstacles to completing a unified curriculum and textbook is incredible. Beyond the institutional impediments like bureaucracy, political maneuvering, and lack of context for reconciliation, there is the conceptual confusion over the purpose of history education. The history curriculum is meant to bring the Lebanese together, but whether by nationalist unity, pluralist cooperation, shared commemoration of suffering, or the egalitarianism of objectivity, is debated. A group of Lebanese historians might be able to agree on the content of a nationalist history, or a history aiming at objectivity and the bare chronicling of facts, but when history education is supposed to be everything to everyone (including manipulative ideologues), it stands very little chance of overcoming the considerable disputes over what its content should be. The experience of the civic education curriculum also suggests the relative

[299] Interview with Nemer Frayha, August 21, 2012, Zouk Mosbeh.

weakness of whatever unified history curriculum might emerge, especially since the likely result is a textbook that ignores historical skills and ways of thinking in favor of lists of events.[300]

On the other hand, a unified curriculum and textbook in history could well do far more than the comparatively bland civic education. The content analysis in chapter two suggests that the curriculum does more unifying than is commonly thought. For a great number of students in Lebanon, it seems that the content of their history textbooks is far less contentious, insulting, and chauvinistic than the standard public discourse among politicians over Lebanese history. Greater central control would be a good thing, and a unified textbook would be as well, but the curriculum may be the most important piece. The constraints of an updated curriculum, when combined with the limits on classroom time and the powerful incentive of knowing appropriate examination answers, could work to restrict private textbooks to a field of debate that stresses unity over division.

While classroom history education may be stunted in Lebanon, history is nonetheless a wide field of contestation. Given the multiplicity of narratives and the conceptual confusion over what history is and should do, the best history education would probably be one based on critical thinking skills, so that students could navigate the field of this history production intelligently and challenge the narratives from all sides. Fashioning the ideal history is not the solution to Lebanon's political divisions. In the end, the limitations of truth and reconciliation efforts in other postwar states have made it clear that while "truth is truth…it is not social or institutional reform."[301] Even an ideal history textbook that addressed the painful reality of conflict in Lebanese society would not remove the grounds for continuing conflict. Unification of the history curriculum could help move toward political reconciliation, but my reading of Lebanese

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[300] Interview with Adnan El-Amine, August 22, 2012, Beirut.
[301] Ignatieff, "The Nightmare From Which We Are Trying to Awake," 322.

history textbooks and debates over curricular reform suggests that the settlement of disputes over history calls for a good deal of political reconciliation.

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